



Roy Pastor is a BCA Advanced Level Instructor. He is a principle and an instructor with the American Academy of Billiard and Cue Sports, a BCA accredited training facility. He may be contacted at www.Billiardacademy.com
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Stroke and body mechanics for the mechanical bridge

There is arguably no single piece of billiard equipment more maligned, feared, and cursed than the mechanical bridge. Players have gone to great lengths to avoid its use. Shooting behind the back, one-handed spear strokes, climbing on the table, and hiding the bridge before the match are but a few measures some players are willing to take rather than admit that they don't know how to properly use the bridge.

However, a properly used mechanical bridge can be a powerful weapon in the pool player's arsenal. By developing an understanding of the required stroke and body mechanics you will be able to alleviate any apprehension associated with using the bridge and approach your next bridge shot with confidence.

The most significant difference between the bridge stroke and a



should meet at a 90 angle.

stroke used in normal play is the horizontal position of the forearm. As with your conventional stroke, your head should be in a vertical position directly over the butt of the cue. When the tip of the cue is close to the cue ball, your forearm and the cue stick

Be mindful to keep the butt of the mechanical bridge out of the way, preferably on the table held securely by your bridge hand.



The horizontal bridge requires an “overhand” grip. Look at the photograph above. The thumb is underneath the butt of the bridge and the fingers rest lightly on top of the bridge. As with the grip used in a vertical stroke, the grip should be light enough to permit the grip hand to act like a hinge. The wrist and the forearm should be the only parts of your body moving when stroking with the mechanical bridge.

Many who have tried the horizontal bridge stroke and the overhand grip report feeling “uncomfortable” when stroking. Although most players find it difficult to articulate the exact nature of this “feeling”, it is generally caused by a slight twisting of the upper torso.

Good stroke alignment and mechanics allow a player to comfortably and naturally position his or her upper torso so that the cue follows the direction of their line of sight. Adjustments to this alignment are most often accomplished through modifications to the stance.

In the traditional American pool stance, the right handed player will position their right foot under the butt of the cue while placing the left foot forward at an angle which allows for balance and comfort. The

player's weight will be distributed primarily on the forward left leg bent at the knee. Left handed players, under this model, stand with their right leg forward and their left foot aligned under the butt of the cue.



In order to alleviate the twisting of the upper torso which results from the horizontal stroke and the overhand grip, try adjusting your stance by reversing the position of your feet. In the example of our right handed player, the right foot is placed in the forward position and the left foot moves towards the back. As with the vertical stroke, the right foot remains under the alignment of the butt of the cue. The process is mirrored for the left handed player.

By reversing your stance, developing a horizontal stroke, and using a light overhand grip you will avoid that uncomfortable feeling which results from the twisting of your upper body. With a little practice you will be able to master the mechanical bridge stroke, approach each shot with confidence and cause trepidation in the eyes of your opponent.

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