

How To Play Kelly Pool

Kelly pool (also known as pea pool, pill pool, keeley, the keilley game and killy) is a pool game played on a standard pool table using a standard set of sixteen pool balls. Gameplay involves players each drawing one of fifteen numbered markers called peas or pills at random from a shake bottle, which assigns to them the correspondingly numbered pool ball, kept secret from their opponents, but which they must pocket in order to win the game.



Kelly pool is a rotation game, which means that players must contact the lowest numbered object ball on each shot first until the opportunity to pocket their own is presented. Two rule variants are set forth under rules promulgated by the Billiard Congress of America (BCA). In the simpler form, the object of play starts and ends with the goal of pocketing one's secret ball. In the second, in addition to the goal of pocketing one's secret ball, points are scored in various ways. In the instance where pills are unavailable, a cloth may be used to cover the balls, which are then chosen blindly, recorded, and replaced for play.

Set up

One of many valid kelly pool racks: The 1 ball is at the apex of the rack and is on the foot spot, the 2 is in the corner to the racker's right, and the 3 ball in the left corner, with all other balls placed randomly, and all balls touching.

At the start of kelly pool, the numbered markers (commonly called peas or pills, and sometimes tally balls or shake balls) are placed in a specially made, narrow-necked container (called variously a bottle, pea bottle, pill bottle, kelly bottle, tally bottle or shake bottle) which is shaken to randomly distribute them. Each player then draws a numbered pea from the bottle. The number of the pea drawn assigns to that player the correspondingly numbered object ball, which each player must keep secret from their opponents. The object of the game is for the player to legally pocket their assigned, undisclosed ball (sometimes called their "private number").

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Rules of play

Kelly pool is a rotation game, which means that the lowest numbered ball on the table must be contacted by the cue ball on every shot. There are no called safeties in kelly pool; the legal pocketing (i.e., with no foul committed on the same stroke) of the lowest numbered ball on the table, permits and requires the shooter to continue play. When a ball is illegally pocketed it is spotted to the foot spot (or as close as possible, toward the foot rail).

If a foul is committed, there is no point penalty and the incoming player has the option of accepting the table in position, or requiring the offending player to continue shooting. However, when the foul is the result of jumping the cue ball off the table, or scratching it into a pocket, the incoming player has cue ball in hand from the kitchen (behind the head string), and retains the option of forcing the opponent to shoot. Whichever player ultimately shoots with cue ball in hand has the option of spotting the object ball to the foot spot if it is in the kitchen area.

Scoring

There are two main scoring variations; under the first and simpler ruleset, the first player to pocket their private number wins. Under the second variation, although a player still wins by pocketing their private number, points are scored in various ways:

- Two points are given by each participant to the winning player for the pocketing of their private number
- A player receives one point for pocketing any other player's private number, and the player whose private number was pocketed is penalized one point (and can have a negative point total), but is not out of the game and can still win points in this way
- If a player whose private number is pocketed by another does not disclose this fact before a subsequent shot is taken, the non-disclosing player forfeits, immediately losing the game, and the player who made that ball is given two points instead of one. In the event that no player succeeds in pocketing his private number, gameplay ends when the last private number is potted, and the game is played again with all points values doubled.

