

Jumping with the Dart Method

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In "the old days" we jumped balls with a full cue or with just the shaft, but the jump shot was not common, as it is today. In the mid-90's, enterprising entrepreneurs developed and marketed jump cues that made ball-jumping so easy, it became ridiculous. The BCA eventually stepped in and set some limits on cue design: 9mm-14mm tip diameter, 25-ounce maximum weight, 40 inches minimum length, leather or synthetic leather tip material. That got rid of the really fat tips, the really short cues, and the tip materials that were far from the traditional leather tip that had been the standard for some 200 years. Within those limits, cue makers and engineers got busy and have been evolving jump cues, break cues, and combined jumpbreak cues ever since.

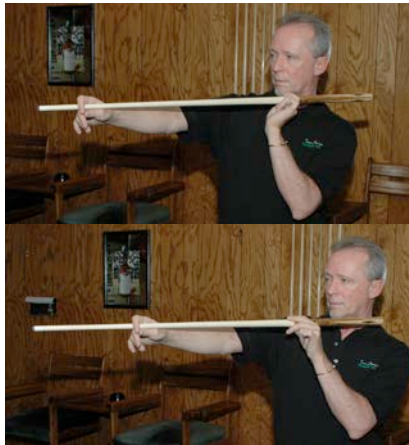
There are two primary techniques commonly used for ball-jumping today: Dart Method and Pendulum Method. This column presents the Dart Method. It's called "dart" because you hold the cue like you'd hold a dart: elbow down, grip hand up, loose grip. Lots of wrist movement in the stroke.

Dart Method is the easier technique when you need to hop over an obstacle that's close to the cueball, i.e., when you need to make the cueball jump short & high. Pendulum Method is easier for long & low cueball trajectories (next column).

The three most common errors players make when trying to jump are:

1. **Gripping too far back on the cue** – Makes you swing with your whole arm, instead of wrist & fingers. Very difficult to stroke straight.
2. **Gripping too tightly** – Requires you to muscle the ball, instead of letting the stick do the work. Destroys your fluidity.
3. **Hitting too low on the cueball** – Players think they have to scoop or lift the cueball to get it to jump. Wrong. You have to send force into the core of the ball, or just below the core.

To get the feel for Dart, begin by gripping the jump cue at the joint (see Practicing photos), point it at a far wall, and flap your wrist fluidly all the way forward & back, as if you're throwing a dart. Get your wrist really loose & fluid. Grip very lightly, with the thumb and one or two fingers. Try to keep that feeling as you lower the front of the cue down to set up for the shot.



Practicing Dart Stroke



Dart Stroke – side view



Dart Stroke – front view

As you lower the cue into position, stand sideways to the shot and step in close enough to be able to elevate the cue to about a 35° to 45° angle and comfortably see down it.

Pin your forearm to your chest. This will ensure your stroke arm and stick are in the vertical plane of the shot and it will bring the stick under your eyes, so you can see and stroke straight down the shot line. It will also help restrict your arm movement, isolating and allowing your wrist to do most of the swing movement.

Try to get your grip hand under your face. Bridge high, with an open bridge. Make your bridge as stable as possible. Bring your tip close to the cueball to see where you're going to strike it. Imagine a BB at the core of the cueball. Aim at or slightly below the BB. Have someone stand off to the side and tell you when you are aimed at the core of the ball. Don't aim higher or you'll trap the cueball between the tip and table. Most players aim too low and don't realize it.

Aim as best you can. Keeping your eyes on the cueball, throw your dart! Stab the table! Do it with authority, but do it with a very light grip. Try opening your hand, so your wrist hinges more easily. Remember, your forearm is resting on your chest, so it doesn't move much.

You must believe and expect the shot to work. If you don't believe it, you will grip tightly, muscle the shot, and lose the fluidity that allows the steeper jump shots to work.

Come view a Dart Method video clip at PoolClinics.com/products.html, and let's get jumping!