

# How Do I Miss Thee? Let's Count the Ways...

by Tom Simpson © January 2005

Have you ever made the effort to study your pattern of missing? For cut shots, there are really only four ways to miss (not counting miscues, fouls, etc.). They include:

1. Overcut to the left
2. Overcut to the right
3. Undercut to the left
4. Undercut to the right

For straight-in shots, you can only miss left or right. Logging this data for all of your shots for a while (at least a few hundred shots) can lead to some useful insights about your game.

The illustration below shows which information to collect. Just make a tick mark in the proper box after each shot. To make this easier, you can download an Excel spreadsheet containing a data collection form and an analysis page at my website (near the bottom of the home page at [www.PoolClinics.com](http://www.PoolClinics.com)).

CUTTING TO THE LEFT	STRAIGHT-IN	CUTTING TO THE RIGHT
OVERCUT	MISSED LEFT	OVERCUT
MADE BALL	MADE BALL	MADE BALL
UNDERCUT	MISSED RIGHT	UNDERCUT
TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL

Many players have patterns of missing that could easily be improved. But first, you have to *spot your patterns*. Examples of things to look for:

- Overall miss/make percentage. Track this over time, and hopefully, see improvement.
- Do you tend to miss by undercutting? If so, you are probably not compensating adequately for collision-induced throw. Cut a little thinner, especially when shooting softly.
- If you find you're taking significantly more cut shots to one side than the other, you've found your cutting preference. Dealing with spot shots, ball-in-hand setups, and pattern planning, it's helpful to know your preference. It's also smart to work hard on your weaker cut direction and balance out your game.
- Do you tend to miss cuts to the left one way and cuts to the right the other? You may be consistently failing to hit the vertical axis of the cueball. While it may look to you like you are hitting center, you are always off a little to one side, always in the same direction. This problem is quite common. It is correctable, but takes effort, since you have to accept that your "natural" perception is incorrect. It's hard to accept that you are seeing "wrong".
- If you make cuts to one side much better than to the other side, this is most likely a sighting issue. You're seeing cuts correctly on one side, but not on the other. Practice heavily on your bad side.
- Do you tend to miss your straight-in's to the same side? You may have an aiming issue, but more likely this indicates you are hitting a little to one side of the vertical axis (always the same side), although it appears to you you're hitting center. The miss is a result of squirt and spin-induced throw. Learn to hit the vertical axis and know you're doing it.

*Make the changes you need. If you keep doing the same things in the same way, you keep getting the same results.* Re-visit this exercise from time to time and see how you've changed and whether you've improved.