

**RILEY**<sup>®</sup>

ENGLAND

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**10  
TIPS**

**BEFORE BUYING  
SNOOKER & POOL  
TABLES**





**WATCH: TIME LAPSED  
SNOOKER TABLE INSTALLTION**  
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## BUYING A SNOOKER TABLE CAN BE TRICKIER THAN YOU THINK!



Stuart Lacey, Managing Director and Owner of Riley, tells you why.

There are number of pitfalls, including the least obvious challenge of, who installs and sets up your Snooker table.

Pool tables are less complex and not as high risk, but in any case, read these top tips as a lot of the tips apply to pool tables also.

### Introduction

One of the issues we see regularly is someone who spends £15,000 on a Snooker table doesn't always see the benefit of using a Riley Fitter to install and set up the table. Some customers would rather take a chance and recruit a table fitter locally.

Guess what? This choice almost always ends up being the wrong choice and subsequently we must then send our fitters out to rectify the problems.

Let me explain. If you go out and purchase say a new Porsche, Bentley or an Aston Martin, where would you take the car when it was due a service? The smart answer is, the Dealer or Garage where you bought it from. The wrong answer is, to the small garage around the corner from where you live who happens to have a mechanic who once upon a time worked for Porsche, Bentley and or Aston Martin.

The moral of the story is, wherever you buy your Snooker table from, make sure the company is a specialist Snooker manufacturer and not a pool table manufacturer who has turned their hand to making Snooker tables.

Remember, pool table fitters can very rarely install Snooker tables without the requisite training (this takes normally 2 years of field experience to be properly trained to install Snooker tables).

Take a look at the video above, you will then understand what i am talking about.

If your table is badly fitted you will have problems invariably on an almost ongoing basis, that is why Riley offer a 25-year warranty with our snooker tables, but the warranty only applies if the table is fitted and installed by a Riley Fitter.

The reason, bad fitting causes numerous problems and can take considerable time and effort to rectify, in some extreme cases, component parts will have to be replaced entirely due to being fitted incorrectly.

So, remember don't make the same mistake as the person who takes his new Porsche to the small garage around corner to save a few dollars, pounds or euros. Riley tables are Riley tables for a reason.

Now on to my Top Tips.

How do you decide on which Snooker table you should buy?

When buying a Snooker table, it's very difficult to understand who and where to buy a Snooker table from.

Here are 10 things for you to consider before making your decision.



## TIP 1: BUDGET

Snooker and pool tables are like watches in many respects, you can buy a table that will look like a snooker or a pool table, even play like a snooker or pool table, but when you look closer, you know the saying, "you get what you pay for" When buying a snooker or pool table, you need to set a budget. The higher the budget, the better the table will be, well, that is the case with Riley tables! This is not always the case with competing brands.

Snooker tables are complex products and normally when purchased it's carefully considered. How do you research what makes a good Snooker Table and not such a good one? That's why I have created a Top Tips guide to help you do your research, even if you decide not to buy a Riley table.

Budget will dictate the bracket of table you eventually choose, it normally always does. Remember, if a price sounds too good to be true, it normally is just that.



## TIP 2: QUALITY

Quality and price normally go together, again the higher the price of a Riley table the better the quality. It could be the wood types, these vary immensely, it could be the slate, Italian versus Brazilian or Chinese, or it might be the cloth. One of the most important elements to consider when purchasing a Snooker table is the cushions. Should you buy standard wood cushions or steel block cushions? Are the Steel block cushions manufactured in China or are they manufactured in England? What's the difference, steel is steel, right? Wrong.

At Riley we are biased, the issue being we don't compromise quality at any cost. You may be asking yourself, what is the difference between standard wood cushions and Steel block cushions, it's simple, using a car analogy again, it's like driving a Ford versus a Porsche, that's the only way I can describe the difference. Don't get me wrong, Fords are very good cars, reliable and they do what they are built to do, be driven, but do they deliver what you are looking for? Several million people each year buy Fords for whatever reason, many millions more choose other brands presumably because they want something different to what Ford offer. It's the same with snooker tables. The difference is, your choice is not as varied, in fact your choice is limited.

Riley has been established for more than 120 years. All our tables are designed and manufactured in the U.K. There are not very many other snooker table makers left in the U.K. Other than Riley, why? China.

Over the past 20 years or so, several Chinese companies have entered the Snooker table market, some of these companies will be here today, gone tomorrow. Others have managed to stay the distance and supply their tables to clubs around the world.

As I see it, Chinese made tables are what they are, a cheaper, lower quality, snooker table, that looks like a snooker table, plays like a snooker table and in most cases will cost a lot less than a Riley snooker table. It goes back to what I said before, you get what you pay for.

Chinese made tables will use timbers generally sourced in Asia. Quality of workmanship and finish will be to an acceptable standard on most occasions, but not all. Cushions will generally fulfil their required purpose until the temperature of your Snooker room fluctuates in the winter or summer depending on the degree of temperature swing. If you live in Dubai or in the West of Canada, then you could experience real issues. Why? the timbers in China are seldom kiln dried to the same extent over time that they should be, this controls the moisture content in the wood.

Riley tables are manufactured to ensure the moisture content in our timbers is tightly controlled to around **12%**. Too much moisture in the timbers can make them unstable in different climates. We have to prevent the cushions expanding and contracting, in effect warping. If the cushions warp, it literally is game over. But, it is a difficult balancing act; Too little moisture means the dry timbers will crack over time, especially with the full weight of the slate (over 850kg) bearing down. So, we expertly kiln dry all of our timbers to achieve a controlled level of moisture content.

Most people are unaware that raw timber is rarely supplied in a size to make the legs of a snooker or pool table from a single piece. The leg timbers must be expertly bonded into a single block that can then be turned. But, this process is filled with potential pitfalls. Some manufacturers use an inferior wood adhesive to keep costs down; some do not have the equipment to apply sufficient pressure to the block whilst the adhesive is bonding; some only allow the minimum time for the adhesive to bond so that they can increase output on their production line. Any one of these factors can lead to the legs cracking over time.

So, it is important to know where your table is made.



**WATCH:**  
PROMOTIONAL VIDEO  
[Click For 2 Minute Video](#)

## TIP 3: BE CLEAR ON WHAT YOU EXPECT

Most people who purchase a snooker or pool table want the best playing experience available on the market at the cheapest possible price. Let me think, (going back to my car analogy again) if you buy a Ford (which are very fine motor cars in my opinion) are you going to get the same driving experience, from every model, as you would get from a Porsche, Aston Martin or Bentley? The short answer is probably not. That said, most Porsche, Bentley's and Aston Martin, in terms of performance, speed, comfort, luxury, would out perform a Ford. Again, People's criteria will vary and some would argue the Ford out performs the other makes I have mentioned for what ever reason. At the end of the day its personal choice.

Let me be clear, if you want a snooker or pool table for a certain budget, prepared for the timbers to crack or warp over time, not too concerned if the playability will be as it should be from when you buy it to 1, 2 or 3 years down the road, then that's fine. It's similar to throw away fashion, wear it half dozen times then buy a new one.

Riley tables are built to last a lifetime, in fact, we from time to time stumble across the odd antique Riley table that is 70, 80 even 100 years old. With a rub down, change of rubbers, new cloth, new pocket leathers and a full service, even an 80-year-old Riley table performs better than most of our contemporary Chinese competitors.

Most American companies, French companies, Spanish companies who claim to know how to make snooker tables really have very little concept of how to actually make a Snooker table, remember that. There is a vast difference between a snooker table and a pool table.



## TIP 4: DESIGN

As with all products that start out life looking a specific way, they often evolve. That said, Snooker tables look very similar to the way they did 100 years ago. We may be able to enhance performance through the development of technology but it's not so easy to change the look of a Snooker table in order to move things on.

The Ray snooker table is probably the best example of a more contemporary design, as is the Riley Ray Tournament pool table, it's masculine styling and contemporary colour options, create a totally unique offering in snooker tables without affecting the playability, the key is, a snooker table first and foremost should play like a snooker table. We do not compromise this value in pursuit of design.

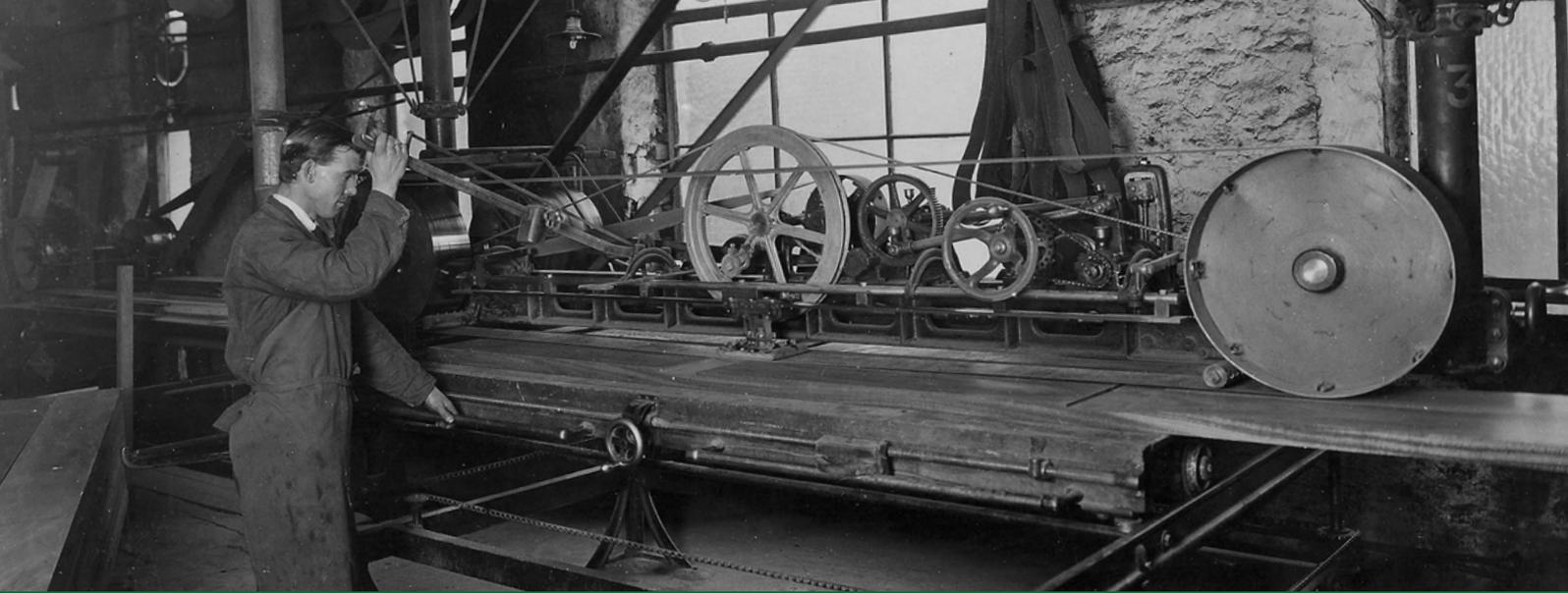
Don't be fooled by a table that has a rise and fall built in, it's not a snooker table.

At Riley we feel a snooker table is a thing of beauty.



**ray**





## TIP 5: LONGEVITY

A properly made snooker or pool table should last several generations, why not? Some Riley tables are still in situ to this day. Some are more than 100 years old.

We recently removed an old Riley table from a working man's club in London, we tracked the table back to the 1930's, the table looked pretty battered as you would expect, on closer inspection the rubber on the cushions was in reasonable condition due to the fact the table had probably been serviced at some point in the past 20 years. The slates upon closer inspection were in amazing condition, the origin we believe was somewhere in Wales, yes Wales. Quarries in Wales once upon a time produced the slates for most snooker tables and it was fine slate, no doubt about that. Today Italy produces the only truly high-quality slate, so the key is, if you want quality go for Italian slate, nothing else really compares.

Back to this 80-year-old table, to our amazement, we found the timbers (selected Mahoganies) were in what we can only describe as exceptional condition. There were some signs of wood rot in the base of the legs, but other than that the table was solid, literally.

When compared to the tables of today, you have to admire the build quality of this Riley table dating back 80 years or so. The construction quality of the tables built back in the day were simply ahead of their time. Built with the intention to last, quality was obviously the main consideration when Riley snooker tables were rolling off the production line. I am pleased to report, on closer assessment many of the build quality attributes back then are almost identical today. Granted in the 1930's steel cushion technology had not been thought of, cushion rubber so to speak was dubious at best but has developed since, other than that, a Riley table then by and large is a Riley table today.

Heritage, Tradition Quality & Craftsmanship, these are attributes you cannot buy, they evolve over time.

HERITAGE/TRADITION



QUALITY

CRAFTSMANSHIP



**WATCH:**  
**SNOOKER TABLE INSTALLTION**  
Click For 5 Minute Video

## TIP 6: PEACE OF MIND

How do you choose a Snooker table in this day and age? With the internet being what it is, your choice is potentially much wider than it's ever been. Unfortunately, the saying, " you pays your money, you take your chance" has never been truer.

I always say, whatever you buy you should do your research, make sure you know the basics before you take the plunge and buy your table. Find out about the types of timbers used, the cushion type, wood or Steel block, the cloth type, slates, etc but most importantly, the Fitter, who will fit your table? Will it be a Snooker table Fitter with years of experience, or a Pool table Fitter who thinks he has years of experience, the two are not the same..

The table Fitter is simply an essential part of owning a Snooker table, he can make a bad table, reasonable, he can make a good table great he can make a great table a master piece. It comes down to one thing, if you want a timeless classic, a thing of beauty, something you can admire when you walk into the room, make sure you get the right Fitter to deliver this key component when owning a Snooker table, oh and of course, make sure you choose the right table.



## TIP 7: TRUST

What is Trust? We believe you should be able to trust in what you are told about our company, our product, our service, our warranty.

We believe in being honest upfront and transparent at all times, our sales team are very clear on these values.

Trust is not something that is automatically present just because you visit our website and the images you see appeal to whatever it is you are in search of. We understand that certain things we say as a company may be challenged, by you, some of our competitors and even past customers, but what we do insist on, as a company at all times is, integrity.

We would rather lose a sale than mislead any of our customers and that's the truth. We know our product does not work for everyone, we know we have extremely high standards with prices to match those standards, but that's where we sit as a brand in the snooker and pool industry.

Some call us the leading light, some see us as a bench mark in the industry, some see us as a threat to their existence, some like to shoot us down and some, well, really appreciate what we bring to the market and the differing options of snooker and pool tables we offer. In short, we do occupy a certain space which is unique to Riley the brand.

We are always happy to provide help advice and assistance even if a Riley table is not for you.

Feel free to contact [Andrew Baker](#) with any question you may have and he will do his best to answer that question.

If you want some advice on a competing brand, we will give you an honest opinion. Not all of our competitors are necessarily bad, they just do things differently to us.

[GOT A QUESTION? – ASK IT HERE!](#)



## TIP 8: WARRANTY

Always check what the warranty says, Riley give a 25-year warranty on all our snooker Tables.

Guarantee / 25-year Warranty.

### [RILEY ENGLAND 25 YEAR WARRANTY - SEE IT HERE!](#)

There is a difference between a Guarantee and a Warranty.

Our Guarantee is, we will give you the best snooker table money can buy, we will give you great service, we will give you peace of mind and we Guarantee you will not be disappointed. If for some reason you are disappointed, we Guarantee to put whatever is wrong, right.

Our Warranty is a written Guarantee that gives you certainty for 25 years. You may be asking why 25 years? and that's a fair question. The answer is simple, I was in China about 5 years ago, visiting one of the many Snooker clubs that house Riley tables. I was chatting with the owner of the club and was genuinely trying to extract a view from him as to the value of his Riley tables versus local made Chinese tables.

He explained that the Riley Aristocrat which took pride of place in what we would term his Match Zone area, had been there for more than 30 years. This exact same table, had the original cushion rubbers and pockets, the only thing that had changed was the cloth (Cloth wears in a club quite quickly). I examined the table and I have to say it did not look as if it had been in situ for 30 years. The timbers looked in good order, the cushion rails granted, had 30 years of dents and dings, but overall the table looked fantastic. I then asked if I could play on the table. I was handed a cue and to my absolute amazement the table played like a dream. 30 year old cushion rubber !!! Unbelievable, it played like a new table, how, I have no idea.

I left the club that night and thought, if that table plays like that after 30 years, then why do we only give a 5-year warranty on our tables. I immediately changed our Warranty policy from 5 years to 25 years and we have never looked back.

The moral of this story is, businesses often worry about their exposure to long term warranties and the contingent liability on their balance sheets.

I can say from first-hand experience, our 25-year Warranty has caught our customers' eyes. Many of our customers have been not only impressed by the confidence this warranty shows in our product, but also inspired by the way we stand behind our product. It sends a message to our customers, competitors and the industry as a whole, Riley tables are built to last, and we stand behind that fact.

Remember, whatever brand you decide to purchase, always ask about the Warranty.



## TIP 9: BEWARE OF FRAUDS

Riley tables are often counterfeited, even in the UK. The biggest area of concern is second hand and refurbished tables. Very few are genuine and almost impossible to verify. Therefore, make certain you are purchasing from Riley England direct or a dealer appointed by us. You can check with [Andrew Baker](#) who is a real dealer and who is not. In the UK, we only deal direct.

There are a lot of badly made tables in the market, I am sure whatever industry you operate within, competitors of yours will pop up from time to time offering to do what you do at half the price. Well guess what, it happens in the snooker and pool industry too. There are many and they ship tables all around the world, how? They just do, maybe because our product is deemed to be expensive in certain markets and therefore entrepreneurial individuals ask themselves, how difficult is to make a snooker or a pool table ? The answer is very...

On occasion, unscrupulous traders make a table that looks like a Riley table, put a badge on and sell it as a Riley table. Be safe, check with us first to ensure it is genuine.

I have talked about various elements with regards to snooker and pool tables in the past. The bottom line is, most businesses regardless of the industry have various levels of IP, know-how and expertise, it takes a lot of practice to manufacture a product correctly, not some of the time, but all of the time. I won't lie, even we get it wrong sometimes and we have had a lot of practice. So be suspicious when somebody says we make Snooker tables, very few companies do, but if you find one, ask them how long they have been making snooker Tables for.

Remember Riley have been doing it for more than 100 years. (121 years this year in fact).

[121 YEARS OF HISTORY - SEE THE GALLERY HERE!](#)



## TIP 10: ASK QUESTIONS

You must know what is in your product and where it comes from.

Like most things in China, there are good and bad snooker and pool tables. The issue in China is, most companies think they are beyond the Law. Here today gone tomorrow. There are a number of Snooker table makers in China, but it is a mine field. A lot of these companies will sell through dealers around the world, small one-man band type companies who dabble in selling pool tables and who tag on snooker tables as a side line.

My point is, in the West, the trend, particularly in the food industry, is to know about where the produce comes from, what's in it and traceability. A snooker table is no different.

American, French, Spanish, Portuguese made snooker table makers from these parts of the world, normally specialise in Pool table manufacture, not Snooker table manufacture. The tell-tale signs are as follows;

Ask any Snooker table manufacturer these following questions, you can then know for sure if they know what they are manufacturing;

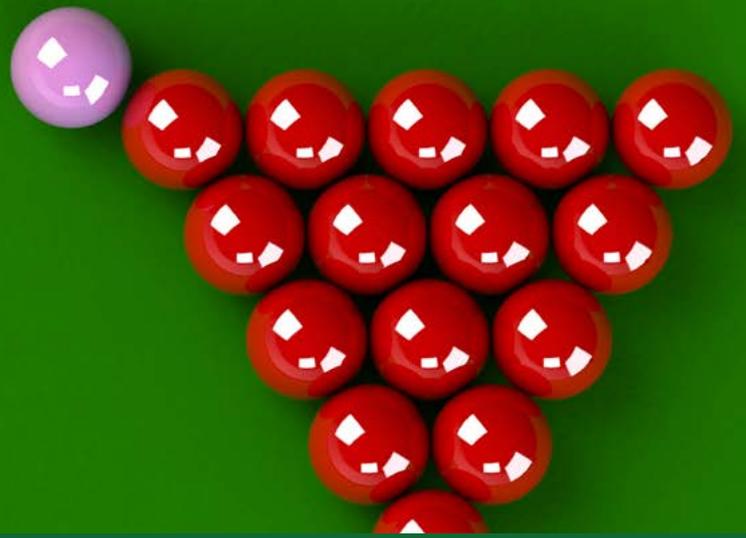
### Question (1)

What type of cushion rubber is used? The answer should be L shaped Northern Rubber from England or another form of L shaped rubber. Northern L shaped rubber is the superior option.

You will get a varied reply ranging from - American made rubber to - Pyramid rubber to - K66 Rubber to - imported rubber, - to, let me get back to you. If you get any of these replies, my advice is walk away.

The rubber on a snooker table is like the type of engine in a car, Diesel, Petrol or Electric. It's simple right? Maybe hybrid comes into the equation today, but I think you get my gist. If the company you are planning on buying from comes up with one of the wrong answers above, then they have no clue and the chances are the rest of the table will be as equally disappointing.

Fitting the wrong cushion rubber to a snooker table will result in the balls jumping when the balls strike the cushion or the balls not responding properly, some cheaper rubbers simply don't have the correct balance and the bounce is often dull and flat. A snooker table being the largest in all cue sports, needs the correct rubber to provide the correct response when the balls strike the cushion.



## TIP 10: ASK QUESTIONS

### Question (2)

What type of cloth do you supply with the table? There are only two manufacturers of any significance who can 1) Make a proper wool napped (directional cloth) and 2) Make a cloth wide enough to fit a snooker table.

It's either West of England also known as Strachan cloth.

Or, there is Hainsworth snooker cloth.

To be frank nothing else will do the job.

There are cheap Chinese variations and one or two European makers but the cloths in most cases for whatever reason don't always match a customer's expectation.

So, if the response you get is anything other than West of England, Strachan or Hainsworth, then think carefully.

### Question (3)

What is the weight of the cloth supplied with the table?

The weight of the cloth should be around 30 ounce, much less and the cloth will be too fast, much heavier and the cloth will be too slow. This is a very important element of a snooker table, the reason, the distance the balls have to travel, snooker tables are large tables.

**RILEY**<sup>®</sup>

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# Aristocrat

TOURNAMENT CHAMPION

EIGHT CHAMPIONS - ONE TABLE



[WWW.RILEYENGLAND.COM](http://WWW.RILEYENGLAND.COM)

[A.BAKER@RILEYENGLAND.COM](mailto:A.BAKER@RILEYENGLAND.COM)

0117 304 27 77