

To Lean or Not to Lean  
By Jim Reiter

Beer pong or Beirut is a relatively recent addition to centuries of creative drinking games. As with most drinking games, Milton Bradley did not print an official list of rules. Even if he did most play by their own rules anyway. The variations of rules for Beirut are vast. Throughout my tenure playing the game, I have experienced a multitude of other host's rules and good or bad, I am writing to defend only one.

The lean rule or the elbow rule as some style it is one of the most hotly contested rules in the game. I am not blind to the other side of the story. I see that it makes sense to have a rule which prevents slam dunking the ball into the cup. In a perfect world, the elbow rule makes sense. Unfortunately, I have never had a Beirut referee officiating one of my matches. The fact is, the elbow rule is unenforceable.

Unenforceable you say... but beer pong is a gentleman's game. Everyone understands the rules and accepts the consequences if they lean. I say Bullshit! The lean rule promotes bickering between teams. People leave the game bitter and pissed off if they lose because their final shot was taken away for leaning. Also, the lean rule extends beer pong games much longer than they need to last. We must all remember why we play drinking games in the first place. The first and foremost rule is to have fun. A close second is getting good and ripped up. Beer pong is the best game out there because it adds a little extra competition, draws a crowd, and of course the brilliant distractions players come up with. We should not let our rules infringe on the happiness of the players. It is competitive, but at the end of the night everyone should say, "What a great night."

So, what is the solution? I will tell you my friends. Abolish your lean rule. The lean rule has no business on a regulation-sized eight foot table. Tell your guests to simply keep both feet on the ground. Some argue that no lean rule makes the game too easy and that tall people will have a huge advantage. Tell your sob story to Mugsy Bogues. There is no height restriction in the NBA and there is no weight restriction in the NFL. If they have an advantage then so be it. The ball must still drop into the cup. Skill is still involved; especially after heavy drinking. And so what if the games are shorter in length. I am sick of seeing the mile long beer pong list at a party. Those on the end have little chance of playing a game that night because many of the games last over half an hour. If skill is what you crave, take away consolidations. Furthermore, play ten-cup in case one team catches fire the other still has a fighting chance to come back. Also, play shoot till you miss rebuttals at the end of the game to bring it into overtime. Overtime is exciting, why not invite it? Whatever you decide, please do not use an unenforceable rule that mars the image of the great sport of Beirut. At first glance it seems like a good idea, but under the scrutiny of experience I hope you will come to the same conclusion I have.

Please send all comments and questions to [Jim@mdbeerpong.com](mailto:Jim@mdbeerpong.com) Thank you.