

Air Hockey: Fact or Fiction?

I have always been a fan of air hockey tables and the game played on them. While they have, throughout memory, been something I've seen nearly everywhere – church basements, arcades, bowling alleys and college dorms – I've sort of always taken them for granted. But what is the truth behind them? Is what I know fact or fiction?

Air hockey tables have been around since God. --- This is fiction. The game of air hockey, along with the table on which to play it is only about 30 years old. Invented in 1972 by an engineer named Bob Lemieux at Brunswick Billiards, air hockey is fairly new in the world of games tables.

All air hockey tables use air. --- This, too, is fiction. In reality, there are many different types of surfaces on which one can play a game of "air hockey". Since the name itself is patented, producers of other tables which feature a slick surface, but no air. This is especially true in the smaller, tabletop models and the portable ones as well.

Air hockey is a casual game. --- Nope. Not true at all. In fact, soon after the game was invented, leagues began popping up and today tournaments are played internationally.

Air hockey is an American game. --- Wrong again. While the game itself was invented in Cincinnati, Ohio, its popularity has spread throughout the world. Russia, Venezuela, the Czech Republic and Spain have all had players win or place in world tournaments.

Everyone has always played air hockey. --- Again, not true. While the game was an instant success, with leagues springing up all over the place and sales going through the roof, air hockey fell out of favor for a few years in the early 80s, when video game arcades became popular.

Air hockey can be played by anyone. --- True. Air hockey is a fun game that anyone can enjoy. Grandkids can play with their grandparents. Husband and wife can spar off in a friendly game. Siblings, cousins and friends can all play and have fun while doing so.

Air hockey tables are big and expensive. --- Well, this one is a yes and no answer. If you are looking for a regulation, 8-foot table, it can get fairly pricey – around \$2,000 - \$5,000. If you have the space and budget for it, that's great. But there are tables available in everything from a 4-foot table top for about \$100 up to the big 8-footers.

You have to know ice hockey rules to play air hockey. --- Not at all. If all you're interested in is knocking the puck around for awhile, that's great. Play until someone has scored 7 goals and you're done. If, however, you want to "play by the rules", check out the USAA (United States Air Hockey Association), where you can find out all the rules.

Air hockey has a surprising rich history and devoted fan-base. People all over the world love this game and enjoy it. Can you count yourself among them?

About the Author

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