



Basic Rules, Customs, and Procedures Every League Player Should Know

Read and understand the Rules of Tennis and The Code.

Remember foremost that “tennis is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy from all participants.”

- Captains or Acting Captains exchange **written** line-ups no later than 5 minutes before the start of the match.
- Captains or Acting Captains sign both copies of the completed scorecard when all match play is over, and retain a copy of the signed scorecard until the full season is concluded.
- Lateness penalties and defaults are mandatory. The MCTA policy provides that default occurs at 15 minutes after the scheduled start time of the match.
- **One** timepiece/action applies to all individual matches—*not* individual choices for each court. *See, MCTA Local Procedure H.6.a.*
- The calling of “Time” is the only outside intervention permitted in a match. All other issues are decided exclusively by the players on the court where the issue arises, *without any involvement of captains, teammates, or other spectators.*
- Coaching is not allowed in USTA League play. The **Rules of Tennis #30** defines coaching as “communication, advice or instruction of any kind and by any means to a player.” This prohibition applies at all times beginning with warm-up and continuing uninterrupted until the match is over.
- Where spectator viewing is limited or not available, spectators may sit along the court *only if* all players agree; and any player may insist that a spectator leave the court area at any time and for any reason.
- Make all “choices” (spin racket, etc.) before you begin warm-up and then warm-up from the side on which you will begin play.
- Remember, it is “warm-up” and not “practice.” This means: all players must take “*all warm-up serves before the first serve of a match;*” **and** *warm-up is not the time for receivers to practice their return of serve*, but rather “a player who returns serves should return them at a moderate pace in a manner that does not disrupt the server.” **The Code, #3–4**
- Play is continuous until the 3rd game of **each** set...no more than 20 seconds between the end of one point and the start of the next, and no stopping between games or on the first change-over. All other changeovers last no more than 90 seconds; a two-minute break is authorized at the end of any set.
- Players make all calls on balls aimed at, travelling toward, or landing on their side of the net. **The Code #5**
- Players are obligated to call against themselves any illegal touch, “not up,” double hit, invasion, etc. *An opponent is not entitled to make these calls.* **The Code #19**
- *Either partner may make calls in doubles;* however, the call of a player looking down a line is much more likely to be accurate than that of a player looking across a line. **The Code, #9.**
- Don’t call a ball out unless you can clearly see part of the court between where the ball hits and the line.
- A player who corrects his/her “out” call loses the point—it is never replayed. **The Code, #12.**
- When a player genuinely doubts an opponent’s call, the only recourse is to ask “Are you sure of your call?” If the answer is yes, that is the end of it. If the answer is no, then reasonable doubt exists and the player who made the call loses the point. No further delay/discussion is permitted.
- On first serves, when your team is serving, *play to your opponent’s call.* He/she is the only one who can call a serve “out” and may be giving you the benefit of the doubt on a close call (as required by **The Code, #26**).
- Server must call the score before beginning his/her service ritual/motion to start the next point. Assuming the server is calling the score loud enough for all to hear, unless a player challenges the score immediately, he loses the right to challenge at a later time—the players have accepted the server’s version!
- Foot Faults may be called for a point penalty only if they are “flagrant” and only after (1) warning the offender and (2) seeking an acceptable 3rd party to make such calls. **The Code, #24.**
- Players should not talk while the ball is moving toward the opponent’s side of the net. If such talk interferes with an opponent’s ability to play the ball, advise the offender it is a hindrance (warn) and play a “let.” If it happens again, it is loss of point due to deliberate hindrance. **The Code, #34.**
- Coman Tiebreak procedure is used in MCTA league matches: everything is the same except you change ends after the first point, then every four points thereafter (after points 1-5-9-13-17...).
- Always change ends at the end of a tiebreak. **Rules of Tennis #30**
- The player/team whose turn it was to serve first in the just-completed tiebreak shall be the receiver in the first game of the next set (or the match tiebreak). **Rules of Tennis #5.b**
- In doubles, teams may change their service order or sides for receivers, at the beginning of any new set or at the beginning of the deciding Match Tiebreak. **Rules of Tennis #14-15**
- Clothing, towels or other objects (including scoring devices) should never be placed on the net, as they become “permanent fixtures” which if hit during play result in loss of point.
- Players may carry/wear their cellphones during a match. However, no electronic device, including a cell phone, may be used on court for any purpose, including timekeeping. **Note:** If a player’s cellphone rings while a point is in play, it is a deliberate hindrance, loss of point. **The Code, #34**
- A “Sudden Death Point” is played only if the game count on the affected court is tied. Otherwise, the winner of the match is the winner of the most games on that court. *See, MCTA Local Procedure I.2-3.*
- **The Code** stipulates that “Shaking hands at the end of the match is an acknowledgement by the players that the match is over.” This means once you shake hands, the match is considered to have been played in good faith and no changes in the *facts* can/will be made. Captains retain their rights to grieve over the proper application of the rules to those facts. For example, if after a “timed” match is over, it is determined that the players misreported the scores, then the reported scores are adjusted accordingly. **However,** if players agree to play additional points/games when it is subsequently determined that none were required, those additional points/games constitute points played in good faith by the parties and become “facts” that dictate the match outcome.
- It is recommended that captains who are themselves participating in a match should instruct their players to initial scores of their individual matches on each captain’s copy of the printed scorecard before departing the site.

Index to ITF Rules of Tennis

<u>Rule #</u>	<u>Page in 2016 Friend at Court</u>
1. The Court	3
2. Permanent Fixtures	4
3. The Ball	5
4. The Racket	5
5. Score in a Game	6
6. Score in a Set	7
7. Score in a Match	7
8. Server & Receiver	7
9. Choice of Ends & Service	8
10. Change of Ends	8
11. Ball in Play	8
12. Ball Touches a Line	8
13. Ball Touches a Permanent Fixture	8
14. Order of Service	9
15. Order of Receiving in Doubles	9
16. The Service	9
17. Serving	9
18. Foot Fault	10
19. Service Fault	10
20. Second Service	10
21. When to Serve & Receive	10
22. The Let During a Serve	11
23. The Let	11
24. Player Loses Point	11
25. A Good Return	12
26. Hindrance	13
27. Correcting Errors	13
28. Role of Court Officials	14
29. Continuous Play	15
30. Coaching	15
31. Player Analysis Technology	16

Select Rules of Tennis

Rule 13: “If the ball in play touches a permanent fixture after it has hit the correct court, the player who hit the ball wins the point. If the ball in play touches a permanent fixture before it hits the ground, the player who hits the ball loses the point.”

Rule 16: “Immediately before starting the service motion, the server shall stand at rest with both feet behind (i.e. further from the net than) the baseline and within the imaginary extensions of the centre mark and the sideline.... The service motion is completed at the moment that the player’s racket hits or misses the ball.”

Rule 18: “During the service motion, the server shall not...change position by walking or running, although slight movements of the feet are permitted....If the server breaks this rule it is a “Foot Fault.”

Rule 21: “The server shall not serve until the receiver is ready. However, the receiver shall play to the reasonable pace of the server...A receiver who attempts to return the service shall be considered as being ready.”

Rule 23: “In all cases when a let is called, except when a service let is called on a second serve, the whole point is replayed.”

Rule 26, Case 2: “A player claims to have stopped play because the player thought that the opponent(s) was being hindered. Is this a hindrance? **Decision:** No, the player loses the point.”

Appendix V: “[When using no-ad scoring] in mixed doubles, the player of the same gender as the server shall receive the deciding point.”

Select Excerpts from The Code

The Code, #2: “All points played in good faith stand.”

The Code, #34: “A ringing cellphone is a deliberate hindrance; if an opponent’s cell phone rings during a point, the player may immediately stop play and claim the point.”

The Code, #35: “A player may feint with the body while the ball is in play. A player may change position at any time, including while the Server is tossing the ball. Any other movement or any sound that is made solely to distract an opponent, including, but not limited to, waving the arms or racket or stamping the feet, is not allowed.”

The Code, #37: “Grunting and the making of loud noises that affect the outcome of a point are hindrances.” (In matches where officials are present, only an official may rule whether the grunting/noise constitutes a hindrance.)

USTA Interpretations/Instruction for Officials

USTA Comment 4.2: “...the player may play with a broken racket. The player may leave the court to get a replacement racket. The player may ask someone else to get a replacement racket. The player is subject to code violations for delays under the Point Penalty System.”

USTA Comment 15.1: “*On the first point of a set, may a doubles team position both players on the deuce side of the court?* Yes, but the server is entitled to know which member of the receiving team is going to receive the first point of the set.”

USTA Comment 21.2: “*Once ready, can the receiver become unready?* The receiver cannot become unready unless outside interference occurs.”

USTA Comment 23.1: “*What happens when the server is interrupted during delivery of the second service?* The server is entitled to two serves.”

USTA Comment 23.2: “*What happens when there is a delay between the first and second serves?* If the delay is caused by the receiver, an official, or outside interference, the whole point is replayed. If the server caused the delay, the server gets one serve.”

USTA Comment 23.3: “*What happens when a ball from an adjacent court rolls on the court between the first and second serves?* The time it takes to clear an intruding ball between the first and second serves is not considered sufficient time to warrant the server receiving two serves unless this time is so prolonged as to constitute an interruption. The receiver is the judge of whether the delay is sufficiently prolonged to justify giving the server two serves.”

USTA Comment 23.4: “A player may call a let only on the player’s [own] court.”

USTA Comment 25.2: “*Must a request to remove a ball that is lying in the opponent’s court be honored?* Yes, but not while the ball is in play. Additionally, a request to remove a ball that is outside the court but reasonably close to the lines also must be honored.”

USTA Comment 26.2: “*Can a player’s own action be the basis for that player claiming a let or hindrance?* No. Nothing a player does entitles that player to call a let.”

USTA Comment 26.5: “*Can the server’s discarding of a second ball constitute a hindrance?* Yes. If the receiver or an official asks the server to stop discarding the ball, then the receiver shall stop. Any continued discarding of the ball constitutes a deliberate hindrance, and the server loses the point.”