



Basic Rules, Customs, and Procedures

Every High School Tennis 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.”

- Lateness penalties and defaults are mandatory. The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association policy provides that default occurs at 15 minutes after the scheduled start time of the match.
- Coaching is limited to your Team Coach; no parents or private coaches allowed! The *Rules of Tennis* define coaching as “communication, advice or instruction of any kind, audible or visible, to a player.” This prohibition applies at all times beginning with warm-up and continuing uninterrupted until the match is over.
- 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 their warm-up serves before the match begins; 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*, at #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. Players are obligated to call against themselves any illegal touch, “not up,” invasion, etc.
- *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*, at #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 is required by *The Code*, at #25).
- Server must call the score after every 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 official or mutually agreeable 3rd party to make such calls.
- 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.
- There are two forms of Tiebreaks: the set tiebreak – first to 7 points leading by two; and the match tiebreak – first to 10 points leading by two.
- There are two forms of Tiebreak procedures: Standard and Coman. The “standard” procedure requires players to change ends every six points. The Coman procedure requires players to change ends after the first point, then every four points thereafter (after points 1-5-9-13-17...).
- You always change ends at the end of a tiebreak (assuming you are using standard changeover procedures in the match).
- 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).
- 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.
- Clothing, towels or other objects (including scoring devices) should never be placed on the net.
- While USTA Regulations permit players to wear cellphones on court in “vibrate” or silent mode, no electronic device, including a cell phone, may be used on court for any purpose. **If a player’s cellphone rings during play, it is a deliberate hindrance, loss of point.** There is no penalty for a cellphone “vibrating” during a point. A player *may* use an electronic device *outside the court area* to receive coaching *during an authorized rest period*.
- *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.
- Not all officials at a match have the same responsibilities or authority. There is only one *Referee* and he/she is the final authority on all rules issues. Other officials at a match are *roving umpires* with responsibility for a number of courts. Roving umpires work under the direction of the Referee.

ITF Rules of Tennis

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USTA Comment 4.2: “Unless prohibited by a published rule adopted by the [event sponsor], 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.”

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.”

USTA Comment 15.1: “On the first point of a set or 10-Point Match Tiebreak may a doubles team position both players on the deuce side of the Court? **Yes, but the spirit of the rule requires that the server know which member of the receiving team is going to receive the first point of the set.**”

Rule 20: “If the first service is a fault, the server shall serve again without delay...”

Rule 21: “...A receiver who attempts to return the service shall be considered as being ready.”

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

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.”

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.”

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.”

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 26.3: “What happens if a player’s cell phone rings?” If the phone rings during the point, the opponent may stop the point and claim the point based on deliberate hindrance.

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.”

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

Appendix VI: “[a] player may not cross the net to check a ball mark...”

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

The Code, #19: “A player shall promptly acknowledge when:

- A ball in play touches a player;
- The player touches the net or opponent’s court while the ball is in play;
- The player hits a ball before it crosses the net;
- The player deliberately carries or double hits the ball;
- The ball bounces more than once in the player’s court.

The opponent is not entitled to make these calls.”

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.”