

Chapter 6: Playing the Game of Tennis

Once your players have had success with the game of Ralleyball and have developed some proficiency with the basic strokes and movement and tracking skills of tennis, you may want to get them started playing an actual game of tennis. This chapter introduces you to the basic rules of tennis, including scoring and how to start a game, and provides a guide for proper conduct on court as well as some sportsmanship tips. It will give you a basic understanding of the rules you'll need when working with players who are 6- to 14-years-old.

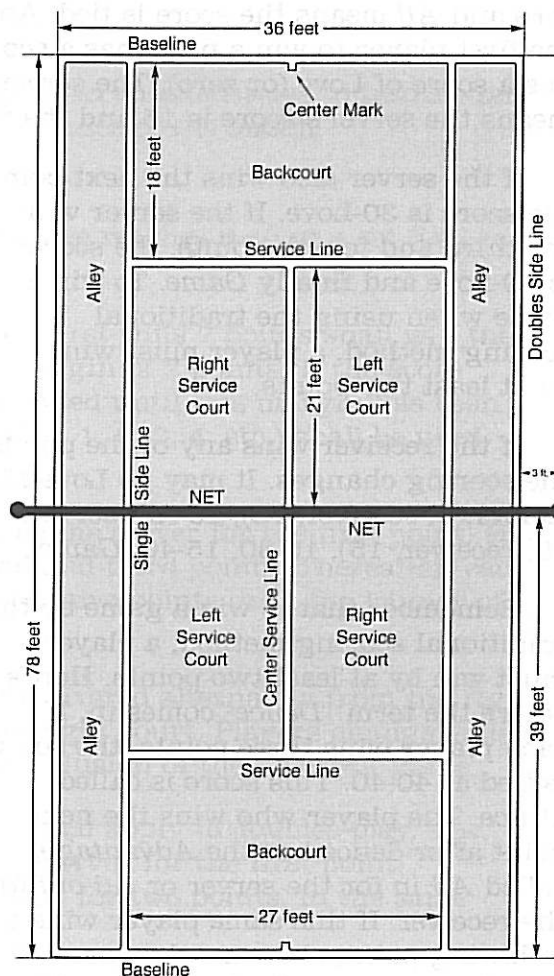
For more specific information on rules and scoring, please check out the *Illustrated Introduction to the Rules of Tennis*, Second Edition, 2001, and *Friend at Court*, which is updated annually. You can get a copy of either publication by contacting the USTA Bookstore at (888) 832-8291.

Starting the Game

In singles play, there is one player on either side of the net, and they use the area of the tennis court within the baselines and the singles sidelines. In doubles, a team of two players on either side of the net uses the full court between the baselines and the doubles sidelines.

When starting a match, players should:

- Introduce themselves to their opponent or opponents (doubles).
- Limit the warm-up before a match to approximately five (5) minutes. Players should hit the ball back and forth with their opponent or opponents. Then each player(s) should take practice serves before play begins.
- To see who or what team serves first one player spins a racquet or tosses a coin. The player or team that wins the coin toss or racquet spin may:
 - (1) choose to serve or receive first,
 - (2) choose which end of the court to start playing on, or
 - (3) require the opponent(s) to choose first.



Tennis Court

- To put the ball in play for each point, one player serves the ball from behind the baseline. That player is called the *Server*; the player who receives the serve is called the *Receiver*.
- When playing doubles, the *Server's Partner* will start at the net and the *Receiver's Partner* will start at the service line.
- In doubles, either player on the team that serves first may begin the match by serving the ball. Either person on the opposing team may receive the first ball in the right (or deuce) court. When it is time for the team that served first to receive the ball, either partner may receive the first ball. After this, players must keep the same order of serving and the same sides for receiving for the whole set.

Scoring: Game, Set, Match

When players are ready to begin playing a game, they'll need to know how to score. The first thing they need to know is that tennis players play a *Match*, which consists of *Sets*, which in turn consist of *Games*. So we'll start by explaining scoring for a Game.

Scoring a Game by the Traditional Scoring Method

Two terms players need to know up front are *Love* and *All*. In tennis, *Love* means zero and *All* means the score is tied. An example of how scoring works is as follows: the first player to win a point has a score of 15; the other player who has no points has a score of Love (or zero). The server's score is always said first. So 15-Love means the server's score is 15 and the receiver's score is 0.

If the server also wins the next point, the score is 30-Love. If the server wins the third and fourth points, the score is 40-Love and finally *Game*. To win a game when using the traditional scoring method, a player must win by at least two points.

If the receiver wins any of the points, the scoring changes. It may go Love-15 (server, 0; receiver, 15), 15-All (server, 15; receiver, 15), 15-30, 15-40, *Game*.

Remember that to win a game by the traditional scoring method, a player must win by at least two points. Here's where the term "*Deuce*" comes in. If each player wins three points, the score is tied at 40-40. This score is called *Deuce*. The player who wins the next point after deuce has the *Advantage*, called *Ad in* for the server or *Ad out* for the receiver. If this same player wins the following point, she wins the game; if not, the score goes back to Deuce. The first player to score two points in a row after a deuce score wins the game.

Scoring Terms

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|
| Love: | Zero |
| All: | Tied score except when Deuce |
| Deuce: | A score of 40-40 |
| Ad in: | Server needs one more point to win |
| Ad out: | Receiver needs one more point to win |

Scoring a Game

| Points | Score |
|--------|-------|
| 0 | Love |
| 1 | 15 |
| 2 | 30 |
| 3 | 40 |
| 4 | Game |

Alternative System for Scoring a Game: No-Ad Scoring

In No-Ad Scoring, everything is the same up to Deuce (a score of 40-40). At this point, the receiver decides whether she wishes to receive the serve from the right half or the left half of the court. In *Doubles*, the receivers will decide which player will receive the serve, the player on the right half or the player on the left half of the court. The player(s) who wins the next point after deuce wins the game. Note: Score-calling in No-Ad Scoring may be either in conventional terms (Zero, 15, 30, 40, Game) or in simple numbers (Zero, 1, 2, 3, Game).

No-Ad Scoring is the recommended scoring system for USA Team Tennis. It is the Scoring System used at the USA Team Tennis Regional and National Championships.

Scoring a Set and the Match

The first player or team to win six games and to be ahead by at least two games wins a *Set*. If the score reaches six games all, you may play a *Tie-break*. In a tie-break, the first player or team to reach seven points with a margin of two points wins the game. Whoever wins the tie-break wins the set. The first player or team to win two sets in the best of three wins the *Match*.

This is the most common method of scoring a set and match. Alternative methods are sometimes used in high school or college matches, indoor tennis matches, USA Team Tennis matches, and other situations when time is a factor.

Tie-Break System of Scoring

The tie-break system of scoring may be adopted as an alternative to traditional scoring, provided the decision is announced in advance of the match.

Set Tie-Break

The Set Tie-Break shall operate when the score reaches 6-all in a set (i.e., each player or team has won six games).

Singles: In a Set Tie-Break, the player who first wins 7 points shall win the game and the set, provided he leads by a margin of 2 points. If the score reaches 6 points-all, the game shall be extended until this margin has been achieved. Consecutive numerical scoring (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) shall be used throughout the tie-break game.

The player whose turn it is to serve shall be the server for the first point. His opponent shall be the server for the second and third points. Thereafter, each player shall serve alternately for two consecutive points until the winner of the game and set has been decided.

From the first point, each service shall be delivered alternately from the right and left service courts, beginning with the right court. Players change ends of the court after every 6 points and at the conclusion of the tie-break game.

Doubles: The same procedures for singles shall apply to doubles play. The player whose turn it is to serve shall be the server for the first point. Thereafter, each player shall serve in rotation for two points, in the same order followed previously in that set.

Sportsmanship and Court Conduct

Court Conduct

- Talk quietly when standing near tennis courts that are in use.
- Don't walk across the back of another court until the players have finished playing a point.
- If people are using your court, don't disturb them until their time is up.
- Store all your gear and items that you may have out of everyone's way.
- If your ball goes into the next court, wait until the players on that court finish the point before you ask for the ball. If a ball comes onto your court, return it as soon as play has stopped on both courts.

Sportsmanship

- Keep a positive outlook throughout the match. Remember, you're playing for fun.
- Keep the game moving. Don't stall and waste time between points. Accept all calls made by your opponent without arguing or sulking.
- Don't distract your opponent on purpose by unnecessary movements or talking.
- If there is a disagreement on the score, go back to the last score that you both agree on, or spin a racquet. Both players must accept the score put forward by the person who wins the racquet spin.
- Before serving, be sure that the receiver is ready to play.
- When receiving a serve, if it is out, don't return it unless you can't avoid doing so. Just tap it gently into the net or let it go behind you.
- If the ball touches any part of the line, it is good. Call the ball out only if you clearly see a space between where the ball hits and the line.
- You should make calls for balls hit to your end of the court. Out calls should be made immediately.
- If you can't see that a ball is definitely out, you should continue playing the point.
- If a ball goes past you and you can't see where it lands, you must give the point to your opponent.
- In doubles, you should help your partner with line calls. If you think a ball your partner called out actually hit the line, you must call it good.
- After the last point, come to the net quickly and shake hands. Let your opponent know that you appreciated the match, no matter what the outcome.