

The Rules of Tennis (and some pointers)

THE RULES

1. The first serve of each game is initiated from the right of the center mark and the server must stand completely behind the baseline. The server alternately serves from the right and the left of the center mark until the end of the game.
2. Balls are served diagonally across the net and into the opponent's service court.
3. A server gets two chances to legally put the ball into play on each point.
4. One server serves an entire game in both singles and doubles matches.
5. The receiver may stand anywhere to receive serve.
6. If the ball hits the net on the serve but lands in the proper service court, a 'let' is called and the server gets another chance for a legal serve.
7. During play (not on a serve) if a ball hits the net and lands on or within the court lines, the ball is in play.
8. During service the ball may be tossed in the air by the server any number of times prior to contacting the ball. There is no penalty for bad service tosses.
9. An underhand serve is legal.
10. A ball that hits a line is good and remains in play.
11. A player may follow through over the net after contacting a ball, but may never touch the net with their racquet or body.
12. The ball may only bounce once on a side, but does not have to bounce before being played.
13. A player may not deliberately contact a ball twice.
14. A player may not throw their racquet in an attempt to play the ball.
15. The ball cannot touch a player's body or clothing.
16. If competing, opponents must agree to the terms of a match before play starts, for instance, what tie-breaker will be played if needed, and whether or not to play 'Ad' games (see scoring).
17. Opponents change sides of the court on odd numbered games, i.e., 1-0, 2-1, 3-2, etc.

THE COURT SCORING

1. Points: 0 points is called love 1 point is called 15 (or 5) 2 points is called 30 3 points is called 40 4 points is called GAME
2. If the score is tied 40-40, it is called 'deuce'. A player must score two (2) consecutive points beyond deuce to win a game.
3. If the server wins the first point after deuce is reached, the score is called 'Advantage-in', or 'Ad-in'. If the server also wins the next point, they win the game. If the receiver wins the point after Ad-in, the score goes back to deuce. If the receiver wins the first point after deuce, it is called 'Advantage-out', or 'Ad-out'. If the receiver wins the next point, they win the game. If the server wins the point after Ad-out, the score goes back to deuce.
4. Players can choose to play No-Ad games in friendly competition. This means when a game gets to deuce, the next player who scores WINS. This cuts down the time it takes to play games and sets.

5. The server must say the score before each serve, and the server's score is always called first.
6. A set consists of six (6) games, and a player must win by at least two (2), i.e., set scores can be 6-1, 6-3, 6-4, or 7-5, as examples.
7. If a set is tied at 6-6, most competitions go to tie-breakers. The player who wins the tie- breaker wins the set by a game score of 7-6.
8. The first person to seven (7) points is the winner of a tie-breaker, but they must lead by two (2) points. Sides of the court are changed after every six (6) points. The first server serves one (1) point, and then players alternately serve two (2) points apiece until the game is finished.
9. A match usually consist of the best 2 of 3, or 3 of 5 sets.
10. Players win points: a. by serving an ace b. when the opponent fails to return the serve or fails to return the ball legally during -play c. when the server double faults
11. Players lose points: a. by failing to legally return a serve or a ball during play b. by double faulting while serving c. if the ball bounces twice on their side of the court d. by reaching over the net to contact the ball e. by touching the net with your body or racquet f. if the ball hits the body.

TERMINOLOGY AND JARGON

- Ace - a serve that goes untouched by the receiver
- Alley - the narrow area that widens the court for doubles play
- Approach shot - a shot which a player follows by coming to the net
- Backhand - a ball hit on the non-racquet side of the body
- Back swing - bringing the racquet back to prepare for the forward swing (also called the preparation)
- Baseline - the line on the end of the court
- Center mark - the mark on the baseline that divides the court left to right
- Cross- court shot - a ball hit diagonally across the court
- Double fault - missing both service attempts
- Down the line - a ball hit parallel, and close to, the sideline
- Drive - a ball hit with force
- Drop shot - a shot that barely clears the net and drops quickly
- Drop volley - a drop shot that is hit from a volley position (at the net)
- Face - hitting surface of the racquet
- Fault - an error, usually used to describe serving errors
- Foot fault - stepping on or over the baseline before making contact with the ball while serving
- Forehand - a ball hit on the racquet side of the body
- Grip - the part of the racquet held by the player
- Ground strokes - forehands and backhands taken after the ball has bounced
- Half volley - a ball contacted immediately after it bounces
- Head - circular part of the frame
- Let - a serve that hits the top of the net and lands in the proper service court
- Lob- a shot hit high in the air and deep into the opponent's court; usually hit over a player at the net
- Neck - part of the racquet between the grip and the head

- Passing shot - volley or a ground stroke hit out of the reach of a player at the net
- Placement - to hit the ball to a predetermined spot
- Preparation - bringing the racquet back behind the body to prepare for the forward swing
- Rally - an exchange of strokes in which the ball goes back and forth over the net
- Ready position - a player faces the net with the racquet held in front of the body with the racquet head higher than the net, feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, weight on the balls of the foot, ready for movement in any direction
- Rush - to advance to the net quickly after hitting an approach shot
- Serve - a skill that puts the ball into play on each point
- Service court - the small boxed area marked for aiming the serve into
- Short game - to rally the ball within the service courts (as in mini-tennis)
- Sidelines - the lines that define the singles and doubles courts
- Smash - an overhead stroke that is hit hard down over the net, often the return of a lob
- Spin - the rotation on the ball caused by the angle of the racquet head at contact; usually topspin or backspin
- Unforced error - a mistake made by a player when a successful attempt should have been made
- Volley - a ball contacted in the air before it bounces on your side of the net.

ETIQUETTE

1. Before playing games, decide:
 - a. who serves first and who plays which side of the court by spinning a racquet
 - b. whether to play Ad or No-ad games
 - c. if you will play a tie-breaker to determine outcome if appropriate
2. It is appropriate for opponents to help each other in pre-play warm-ups by practicing volleys, ground strokes, and serves.
3. When serving:
 - a. make sure your opponent is ready to receive
 - b. call the score so it can be heard, calling your score first
 - c. have two balls in your hand or in a pocket (not on the ground at the baseline)
 - d. make sure there are no stray balls on the court that might get stepped on
4. When receiving serve:
 - a. say nothing if a serve is good, just play it
 - b. point and/or say 'out', 'long', or 'wide' if the ball is served out of play
 - c. say nothing if the serve is obviously out and DO NOT RETURN it (sometimes you will realize a serve is out as you are playing it back. If this happens call the ball out as soon as possible. You are not penalized for playing a bad serve.)
 - d. if a ball lands so close to a line that you are not sure if it's in, assume it's good and play it
 - e. help the server have two balls to serve
5. Make sure doors to the courts are closed.
6. Wait until points are finished on a court before walking behind to pass by.
7. If your ball goes onto another court where a game is being played, wait until a break in the action and then ask for your ball.

8. Dress appropriately. Wear adequate court shoes and clothing suitable for lots of movement.
9. Know the score whether or not you are serving.
10. Tennis is basically a quiet game, but feel free to communicate with your playing partner and your opponent so all present know what is going on. Positive comments are acceptable at all times. DO NOT yell at yourself or your partner for a bad play. No swearing is allowed in class.
11. If a person or ball from another court interferes with your play, you may replay that point.

SKILLS

SERVING: the skill that puts the ball into play on each point.

- Stand so that your feet are pointing at the net standard with your tossing shoulder toward the net. (Right standard for a right-handed server, left standard for a left handed server.)
- Toss the ball into the air while simultaneously pulling your racquet down and behind you, your arms moving in opposition. Start the rotation of your shoulders with your tossing arm. Throw your racquet elbow high and contact the ball with your racquet while your arm and body are fully extended. Your weight will be shifting from your back foot to your forward foot.
- Follow through the ball with your whole body and racquet, that is, your momentum from contacting the ball assertively will pull you into the court.

Key points:

1. The toss shouldn't be too high.
2. Second serves are universally hit at a lesser speed than first serves.
3. Don't try to serve the ball harder than you are capable of controlling.

GROUND STROKES: forehands and backhands taken after the ball has bounced on your side of the court.

- Move to a position to play the ball effectively.
- Take your racquet back in preparation as soon as you see what side of your body the ball is coming to.
- Try to be stopped in good position to shift your weight forward into the ball at contact.
- Follow through the ball with your racquet and the turn of your body.

Key points:

1. Bend your knees and use the strength of your legs to help you hit the balls.
2. The flight of the ball is determined by the angle of your racquet face at contact, as well as where you contact the ball (i.e., in front of you, in line with your body, etc.)

VOLLEY: playing the ball in the air before it bounces on your side of the court.

- Find a comfortable place in relation to the net, not too close, not too deep.
- Stand in a neutral ready position, equally able to play a forehand or a backhand.
- Take a short backswing and punch the ball into the opponent's court. The follow through is also minimal. The best volleys direct the ball away from the opponent to make a return impossible or difficult.

Key points:

1. Volleys do not have to be hit at full force to be effective. Direction is more important than power.
2. The closer you stand to the net, the faster your reactions must be. The further you stand from the net the more chance you have of hitting your return into the net.
3. When playing doubles, do not poach. Trust your partner to play their half of the court.
4. Think of hitting volleys deep into the court, not down.

LOB: a skill that places the ball over the head of the opponent while still landing in bounds. Lobs are often used to force a net player into the backcourt and buy time for yourself, but they can also be used to score points when they are placed perfectly and are not too tall.

- Open the face of your racquet and swing more upwards than across the body as in a ground stroke.
- Defensive lobs travel in a tall arc and force the opponent behind their baseline.
- Offensive lobs are lower, just out of reach of the opponent and are played to score points and aren't easily returned with a smash.

Key points:

1. Make sure the lob is deep enough that a return, generally a smash, comes from a great distance so that you have some reaction time. The biggest mistake you can make with a lob is to leave it short in the court so that your opponent can return it aggressively anywhere they choose.

Source: Courtesy of University of Oregon web site