

Introduction to Tennis: The Rules of the Game

The rules in tennis set the stage for a challenging experience that enjoyably taxes both mind and body.

PLAYING TENNIS

Tennis can be played with two people (*Singles*) or four people (*Doubles*). A 'coin toss' or spin of the racquet determines who serves first. Play begins with a serve from behind the *baseline* into the *Deuce court service box*. One player serves for the entire *game*. On each *point* a player gets two chances to serve into the proper box. If they miss both attempts it is a *Double Fault* (the opponent wins the point). If the serve strikes the top of the net and continues into the proper service box, the player plays a *Let* (retakes the serve). Each point is played from alternating sides (first to *Deuce side*, next to *Ad side*, then to *Deuce side* again, etc.)

The object of the game is to hit the ball over the net inside the appropriate court lines (Inside *sidelines* for Singles, outside lines for Doubles). The ball may bounce no more than once on each side of the net. If the ball touches any part of an appropriate line, it is considered good. If, during play, the ball hits the top of the net and keeps on going into the opponent's court, the play continues.

SCORING

Regular Play: Nothing tends to confound new players more than the scoring system in tennis. To avoid confusion remember, a *Game* consists of the first player to win 4 *points* but you must be ahead by a margin of 2. However, each point in tennis has a 'name'. For example, the name for zero in tennis is "*Love*".

1 point won = "*Fifteen*" 2 points won = "*Thirty*"
3 points won = "*Forty*" 4 points won = "*Game*"
Tied at 3-3 = "*Deuce*" (always played to the Deuce side)

1 point won after "*Deuce*" = "*Advantage*" (A player with "*Advantage*" winning the next point wins the *Game*, if they lose the score returns to "*deuce*". A player must win 2 points in a row to win the game.)

First to win 6 *Games* wins the *Set*. First to 2 *Sets* Wins the *Match*.

Tie-Breaker: If the players are tied 6-6 in *games*, a special game called a "*Tie-Breaker*" is played. The player scheduled to serve starts by serving *one point* to the *Deuce side*. Each player after that serves *two points*, the first from the *Ad side* and the 2nd from the *Deuce side*. The first to 7 points wins the *game* (and the *Set*) but you must be ahead by a margin of 2 points. There are no 'names' for the points in a Tie-Breaker. For example, a player can win 7-5 but if the points are tied 6-6 someone must win 8-6.

ETIQUETTE

Novice players are often intimidated by the "unwritten" code of acting that comes with the game. There are two basic elements to remember for court etiquette:

- **Crossing Courts:** If you need to cross a court (with a game in progress) remember to cross at the back. Do not disturb players in a game or rally. Wait for the point or rally to end before crossing.
- **Ball Etiquette:** If your ball goes into another court, do not disturb the game or rally in progress. Wait for a break in play and ask for your ball. If a ball comes into your court and disturbs your game, stop the play and politely return their ball. Replay your point

