

ITF RULES OF TENNIS

A few of the more common rules that people ask about are listed below. To read the full ITF rules of tennis please go to the following website:-

www.itftennis.com/about/organisation/rules.aspx

11. Ball in Play

Unless a fault or a let is called, the ball is in play, from the moment the server hits the ball, and remains in play until the point is decided.

12. Ball Touches a Line

If a ball touches a line, it is regarded as touching the court bounded by that line.

13. Ball Touches a Permanent Fixture

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 hit the ball loses the point.

19. Service Fault

The service is a fault if:

- b. The server misses the ball when trying to hit it;
- c. The ball served touches a permanent fixture, singles stick or net post before it hits the ground;
- d. The ball served touches the server or server's partner, or anything the server or server's partner is wearing or carrying.

Case 1: After tossing a ball to serve, the server decides not to hit it and catches it instead. Is this a fault?

Decision: No. A player, who tosses the ball and then decides not to hit it, is allowed to catch the ball with the hand or the racket, or to let the ball bounce.

21. When to Serve and Receive

The server shall not serve until the receiver is ready. However, the receiver shall play to the reasonable pace of the server and shall be ready to receive within a reasonable time of the server being ready.

A receiver who attempts to return the server shall be considered as being ready. If it is demonstrated that the receiver is not ready, the service cannot be called a fault.

22. The let During a Service

The service is a let if:

- a. The ball served touches the net, strap or band, and is otherwise good; or, after touching the net, strap or band, touches the receiver or the receiver's partner or anything they wear or carry before hitting the ground; or
- b. The ball is served when the receiver is not ready.

In the case of a service let, that particular service shall not count, and the server shall serve again, but a service let does not cancel a previous fault.

23. The Let

In all cases when a let is called, except when a service let is called on a second service, the whole point should be replayed.

Case 1: When the ball is in play, another ball rolls onto court. A let is called. The service had previously served a fault. Is the server now entitled to a first service or second service?

Decision: First service. The whole point must be replayed.

24. Player Loses Point

The point is lost if:

- a. The player serves two consecutive faults;
- b. The player does not return the ball in play before it bounces twice consecutively;
- c. The player returns the ball in play so that it hits the ground, or before it bounces, an object outside the correct court;
- d. The player returns the ball in play so that, before it bounces, it hits a permanent fixture;
- e. The receiver returns the service before it bounces;
- f. The player deliberately carries or catches the ball in play on the racket or deliberately touches it with the racket more than once;
- g. The player or the racket, whether in the player's hand or not, or anything which the player is wearing or carrying touches the net, net posts/singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap or band, or the opponent's court at any time while the ball is in play;
- h. The player hits the ball before it has passed the net;
- i. The ball in play touches the player or anything that the player is wearing or carrying, except the racket;
- j. The ball in play touches the racket when the player is not holding it;
- k. The player deliberately and materially changes the shape of the racket when the ball is in play;
- l. In doubles, both players touch the ball when returning it.

Case 1: After the server has served a first service, the racket falls out of the server's hand and touches the net before the ball has bounced. Is this a service fault, or does the server lose the point?

Decision: The server loses the point because the racket touches the net while the ball is in play.

Case 2: After the server has served a first service, the racket falls out of the server's hand and touches the ground outside the correct service court. What is the correct decision?

Decision: This is a service fault because when the racket touched the net the ball was no longer in play.

Case 3: In a doubles match, the receiver's partner touches the net before the ball that has been served touches the ground outside the correct service court. What is the correct decision?

Decision: The receiving team loses the point because the receiver's partner touched the net while the ball was in play.

Case 4: Does the player lose the point (if an imaginary line in the extension of the net is crossed before or after hitting the ball)?

Decision: The player does not lose the point in either case provided the player does not touch the opponent's court.

Case 5: Is a player allowed to jump over the net into the opponent's court while the ball is in play?

Decision: No. The player loses the point.

Case 6: A player throws the racket at the ball in play. Both the racket and ball land in the court on the opponent's side of the net and the opponent(s) is unable to reach the ball. Which player wins the point?

Decision: The player who threw the racket at the ball loses the point.

Case 7: A ball that has just been served hits the receiver or in doubles the receiver's partner before it touches the ground. Which player wins the point?

Decision: The server wins the point, unless it is a service let.

Case 8: A player standing outside the court hits the ball or catches it before it bounces and claims the point because the ball was definitely going out of the correct court.

Decision: The player loses the point, unless it is a good return, in which case the point continues.

25. A Good Return

It is a good return if:

- a. The ball touches the net, net posts/singles sticks, cord or metal cable, strap or band, provided that it passes over any of them and hits the ground within the correct court;
- b. After the ball in play has hit the ground within the correct court and has spun or been blown back over the net, the player reaches over the net and plays the ball in the correct court, provided that the player does not break Rule 24;
- c. The ball is returned outside the net posts, either above or below the level of the top of the net, even though it touches the net posts, provided that it hits the ground in the correct court, except as provided in Rules 2 and 24(d);
- d. The ball passes under the net cord between the singles stick and the adjacent net post without touching either net, net cord or net post and hits the ground in the correct court;
- e. The player's racket passes over the net after hitting the ball on the player's own side of the net and the ball hits the ground in the correct court;
- f. The player hits the ball in play, which hits another ball lying in the correct court.

Case 1: A player returns a ball which then hits a singles stick and hits the ground in the correct court. Is this a good return?

Decision: Yes. However, if the ball is served and hits the singles stick, it is a service fault.

Case 2: A ball in play hits another ball which is lying in the correct court. What is the correct decision?

Decision: Play continues. However, if it is not clear that the actual ball in play has been returned, a let should be called.

27. Correcting Errors

As a principle, when an error in respect of the Rules of Tennis is discovered, all points previously played shall stand. Errors so discovered shall be corrected as follows:

- a. During a standard game or a tie-break game, if a player serves from the wrong half of the court, this should be corrected as soon as the error is discovered and the server shall serve from the correct half of the court, according to the score. A fault that was served before the error was discovered shall stand.
- b. During a standard game or a tie-break game, if the players are at the wrong ends of the court, the error should be corrected as soon as it is discovered and the server shall serve from the correct end of the court according to the score.
- c. If a player serves out of turn during a standard game, the player who was originally due to serve shall serve as soon as the error is discovered. However, if the game is completed before the error is discovered the order of service shall remain as altered. In this case any ball change to be made after an agreed number of games should be made one game later than originally scheduled. A fault that was served by the opponent(s) before the error was discovered shall not stand. In doubles, if the partners of one team serve out of turn, a fault that was served before the error was discovered shall stand.
- d. If a player serves out of turn during a tie-break game and the error is discovered after an even number of points have been played, the error is corrected immediately. If the error is discovered after an odd number of points have been played, the order of service shall remain as altered.
- e. During a standard game or a tie-break game in doubles, if there is an error in the order of receiving, this shall remain as altered until the end of the game in which the error is discovered. For the next game in which they are the receivers in that set, the partners shall then resume the original order of receiving.

30. Coaching

Coaching is considered to be communication, advice or instruction of any kind and by any means to a player.

In team events where there is a team captain sitting on-court, the team captain may coach the player during a set break and when the players change ends at the end of a game but not when the players change ends after the first game of each set and not during a tie-break game.

In all other matches, coaching is not allowed.