

The Basic Rules of Tennis & The Code

1. No coaching at anytime during your match. The *Rules of Tennis* defines coaching as "communication, advice or instruction of any kind, audible or visible, to a player." (*USTA Reg. 2.01D*)
2. Your cell phone should be turned off during your match. If a player's cell phone rings during a point, the opponent may claim the point based on a hindrance. A player may wear a cell phone in vibrate mode, and there is no penalty if the phone vibrates during a point. (*2015 Revised Rules of Tennis 26.3*)
3. Before beginning the warm-up, all players should introduce themselves, confirm their lineup position, and spin the racket to decide "choice of ends or service". Players should warm-up from the side on which they will begin play. (*Rules of Tennis 9*)
4. Keep your warm-up to five minutes, please! The warm-up is not "practice". You should make a special effort to return shots directly and kindly to your opponent. Warm-up is not the time for you to practice your return of serve, drop shots, or "put-away" volleys and overheads. (*The Code 3*)
5. Play should be continuous from the time the match starts until the match finishes. Except for retrieving stray balls, a maximum of 20 seconds is allowed between points. Players change ends at the end of the 1st, 3rd and every subsequent odd game of each set. A maximum of 90 seconds (rest) is allowed for changeovers after the 3rd and subsequent odd games. The 90 seconds is timed from the end of the last point before the changeover to the beginning of service after the changeover. You are not allowed 90 seconds (rest) on the changeover after the 1st game - play is continuous for the first three games of a set. A two-minute break can be taken at the end of any set. (*Rules of Tennis 10 & 29*)
6. The order of serve from the first set of the match continues to subsequent sets including the Match Tiebreak, except after a set tiebreak is played (see 9 below). (*Rules of Tennis 14*)
7. In doubles, you and your partner may change who will serve first or change receiving sides at the beginning of any new set or at the beginning of the Match Tiebreak. (*Rules of Tennis 14.1*)
8. The Coman Tiebreak procedure is used for a set tiebreak (first to 7, win by a margin of 2) and a Match Tiebreak (first to 10, win by a margin of 2). The order of serve to start a set tiebreak is a continuation of the set -- the server and side rotation continues as established for that set. Refer to 6 above for Match Tiebreak order of serve. Players change ends after the first point, then every four points thereafter (after points 1-5-9-13-17...). Play is continuous -- 90 seconds is not allowed for tiebreak changeovers. (*Rules of Tennis 10.2 & 29*)
9. Change ends at the end of a set when the total of games of that set is odd. You will always change ends at the end of a set tiebreak. The player/team who served first in the just-completed tiebreak is the receiver in the first game of the next set or the Match Tiebreak. This new order of serve will continue for the remaining sets unless another set tiebreak is played. (*Rules of Tennis 5b & 10*)
10. When you are serving you must announce the game (set) score before the start of every game, and call the point score before the start of every point of the game loudly enough for all players to hear. Disputes over the score should be resolved immediately. (*The Code 31*)
11. You lose the point if you catch or are hit by a ball in play before it bounces, even if you are standing outside the baseline or sidelines. You lose the point if you or your partner is hit by an opponent's serve before it bounces, unless a service let is called (ball touched net first). (*Rules of Tennis 24 & The Code 43*)
12. You make all calls on balls aimed at or landing on your side of the net. (*The Code 5*)
13. Don't call a ball out unless you can clearly see part of the court between where the ball hits and the line. (*The Code 7*)
14. If you correct your "out" call you lose the point—it is never replayed. (*The Code 12*)
15. If you call the ball out, and your partner sees the ball good, the ball is good. (*The Code 14*)

16. If you genuinely doubt 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 or discussion is permitted. *(The Code 11)*
17. You should not talk while the ball is moving toward your opponent's side of the net. If talking interferes with your opponent's ability to play the ball, it is up to the opponent to stop play, advise (warn) you that it is a hindrance and play a let. This call must be made immediately and not after the point has been played out. If it happens again, it is considered a deliberate hindrance and you lose the point. *(The Code 34)*
18. You cannot stop play and call a let if you break a string, your hat falls off, or a ball in your pocket falls out. It is up to your opponent to stop play, advise (warn) you that it is a hindrance and play a let. This call must be made immediately and not after the point has been played out. If it happens again, it is considered a deliberate hindrance and you lose the point. *(Rules of Tennis 26.2 & USTA Final Word)*
19. When a ball from an adjacent court enters the playing area, any player can stop play and call a let as soon as the player becomes aware of the ball. A let cannot be called after the point has been played out. *(The Code 18)*
20. You should stop play and make the call on yourself when: a) a ball touches any part of your body or clothing; b) you touched the net; c) you touched the opponent's court; d) you hit a ball before it crossed the net; e) you deliberately carried or double hit the ball; or f) you hit the ball after it bounced more than once in your court. The opponent is not entitled to stop play and make these calls for you. *(The Code 19)*
21. If during a point you realize you did not change ends, the serve was from the wrong end or from the wrong court, or doubles partners switched receiving sides in the middle of a game/set, you must continue to play the point. Errors should be corrected as soon as discovered but not while a point is being played. If doubles partners switched receiving sides, the error is corrected after the game is completed. When an error is discovered after points or games have been completed, all previous points/games stand as played -- there is no replay. *(Rules of Tennis 27.1 & The Code 2)*
22. If you serve out of turn in a game, the correct player should serve as soon as the error is discovered but not when a ball is already in play. If a ball was not put into play because your first serve was a fault: a) your opponent (correct player) will have a first serve or; b) your doubles partner (correct player) will start the second serve. If the error is discovered after the game is completed, continue the "incorrect" order of serve for the remaining games of the set. All points/games played before the error is discovered stand as played. *(Rules of Tennis 27)*

If you serve out of turn in a tiebreak and an even number of points have already been played, the error is corrected immediately but not when a ball is already in play. Follow a) or b) above when the error is discovered after a first serve fault. If an odd number of points have been played, continue the "incorrect" order of serve for the remaining points of the tiebreak. All points/games played before the error is discovered stand as played. *(Rules of Tennis 27)*
23. If you start a match on the wrong court (you're #1 singles but start playing with the opponent's #2 singles) and the discovery occurs before the first game is completed, players are to go to the correct courts and begin their matches over. If the discovery occurs after the first game is completed, the remaining games/sets will be completed as started and count as a match played in good faith. If two matches have started on wrong courts (#1 and #2 singles), the discovery must occur before the first game of both matches are completed, otherwise all matches must continue to be played as started. *(USTA Q&A Interpretations)*
24. Clothing, towels or other objects (including scoring devices) should never be placed on the net. *(The Code 45 & 46)*
25. "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.