



Beginner's Tennis Guide

By John M Hancock



**Towerpoint Tennis Club
Mesa, Arizona**

1. Introduction



John Morris Hancock

Learning tennis as a beginner (2005), I was always trying to remember to do this or that, and too embarrassed to ask the same question twice. So I created a guide for beginners, when I was a beginner, not after, when I knew how to play.

With the help of various websites and books on the game of tennis, it became obvious that there was much more to this game than just hitting the ball over the net.

The intent of this guide is to provide beginning tennis players a point of reference as they learn the competitive game of tennis. It is not a replacement for competent instruction, which can be obtained within the league. If there is a conflict between these guidelines and those of the East Valley Senior Tennis League, the EVSTL Rules shall be the determining guide.

The main purpose of our senior activity is to play hard, be more than fair, and mainly to have fun while keeping in shape. If you have any doubt as to your physical condition, a physician should be consulted.

As a beginner, you will experience some sore muscles which will normally go away with treatment and time.

If you have a medical condition - please tell your captain.

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3. You & Tennis



The game of tennis is a demanding sport of concentration and movement. Playing with a partner (Doubles) adds another element to the game, which brings a responsibility of cooperation.

We are seniors somewhere between 55 & death, so tennis movement is dependent upon a flexible body and agile mind. Care of your body becomes more critical as the years go by. We have many players who are past 80 and still enjoy a competitive game of tennis.

Female and male identities bring different attitudes, strengths and desires. All of this makes learning the game more complex, but rewarding once achieved. However, the learning process never stops as you climb the ladder of success.

Sometimes we get so focused on tennis that we forget to stop and smell the roses. Too much tennis can bring stagnation to your game, whereas variety can add motivation into your game.

It is now your turn to get started and meet these challenges, the reward of new friends, and the game of tennis at Towerpoint.



4. Your Tennis Body



Warm-Up Benefit:

1. A **warm** muscle contracts more forcefully and relaxes more quickly, thereby body speed and strength can be enhanced.
2. It allows the blood temperature to rise thus providing more oxygen to the muscles, thereby enhancing endurance and performance.
3. Muscles become more elastic, thereby reducing risk of strains and pulls.
4. Prepares the mind for the upcoming event thus increasing focus.

Body Warm-up Exercise: (Increase body temperature)

1. Extend walk to tennis court before practice or play.
2. Include faster walk, quick dance steps and light jogging.
3. The goal is to reach the point of beginning to perspire.
4. If practice or game is later - repeat prior to match.

Stretching:

1. **Rotation** (movement of joints)
2. **Dynamic** (stretching with movement)
3. **Static** (stretching without movement)

Dynamic vs Static Stretching:

Recent research has demonstrated that **dynamic** stretching (with movement) is best done **before** play, while **static** stretching (without movement) is best done **after** play. Recent studies have indicated that **Static stretching** done **before play**, which has been recommended in the past, may actually adversely affect the ability of the muscles to perform in an optimal way. Normal tennis game warm-up is insufficient for body warm-up.

Injury (Ice or Heat): **Ice** is most commonly used for acute injuries where swelling is a problem. **Heat** usually for chronic conditions to help relax and loosen tissues, and to stimulate blood flow to the area.

5. Preparing for Play



1. Wear comfortable clothes, tennis shoes and dress for the weather.
2. Hats/caps and sunglasses may be helpful.
3. Don't eat a heavy meal before play.
4. Before play, do easy walking and arm movement to elevate your heart rate.
5. Stretching your muscles before they are warmed up may result in injury. Walk vigorously before stretching.
6. Rotating various joints is always good.

Lower leg stretch



1. Stand with hands against wall, arms straight
2. Step back 1-2 with one leg, heel and foot flat
3. Hold position 10-20 seconds
4. Bend knee of back leg, heel and foot flat
5. Hold position 10-20 seconds
6. Repeat with other leg

Neck & Shoulder

1. Rotate head to relieve stress on neck
2. Rotate shoulders for stress and tightness

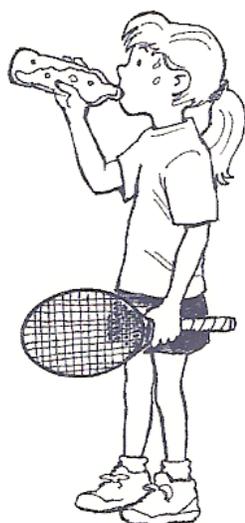
Water: Always bring enough water as dehydration can come quickly in Arizona. Take a healthy swallow between changing sides, even if the weather is cool.

Electrolytes: Especially if hot

1. Use Gatorade or other sport drink
2. There are also "Sport Beans" in flavors.

Medical/EMT:

1. If you have had any major health problems, consult with a physician before playing tennis.
2. The Tennis Club supplied red backed luggage tag should be attached to your tennis bag with your completed EMT information.





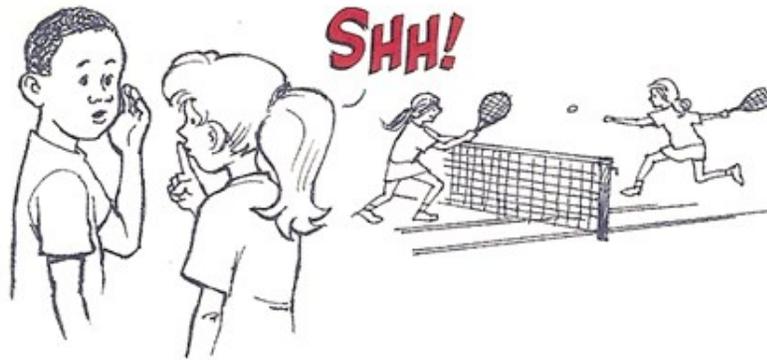
Sunscreen is advisable for sensitive skin. A hat or cap may help to shield your eyes for better ball visibility, especially during your serve.

Mornings can be chilly, so dress accordingly. Layering your clothing provides better activity control during the game.

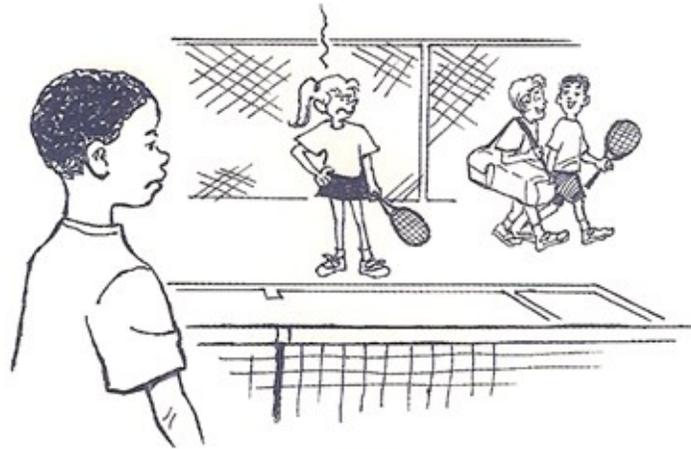
It is normal and usually good, to be nervous before starting a game. This shows that you care about the outcome of the game. Your main concern is not to worry about **the worrying**, this is what hinders your game. Talk to your partner and your opponent, keep from thinking about negative abilities.

“Lead feet” is also common. You may not be warmed up enough or again you are getting too nervous. Your reaction in court play is a major part of the game. So move around, be ready to move once you hit the ball - don't just stand there and watch where your ball goes - watch your opponent.

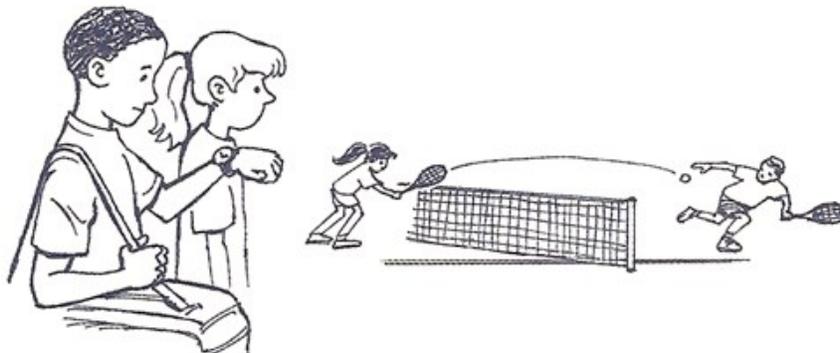
6. Court Conduct



Talk quietly when standing near tennis courts in use.



Don't walk across the back of another court until the players have finished playing a point. This is distracting to them and may affect their play.



If people are using your court, don't disturb them until their time is up.



When you're ready to play, put jackets, water bottles, and any other items you have with you out of everyone's way.



Keep a positive outlook throughout the match. Remember, you're playing for the fun of it.

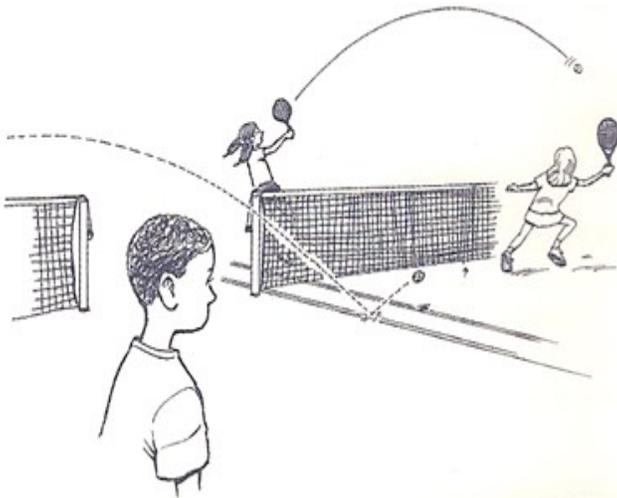


Keep the game moving. Don't stall and waste time between points. Accept all calls made by your opponent - without arguing or sulking.

SERVE IT,
ALREADY!

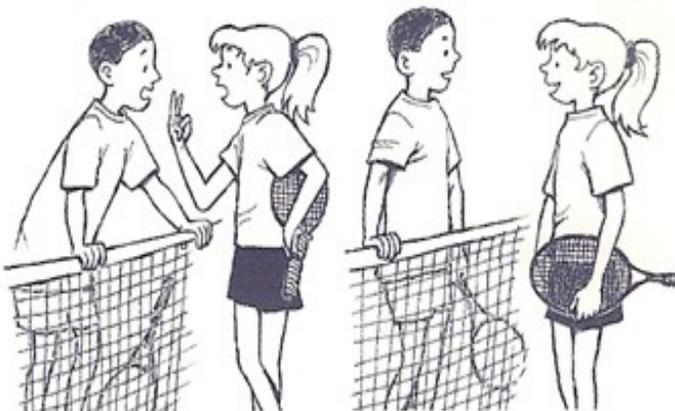


Don't distract your opponent on purpose by unnecessary movements or talking.

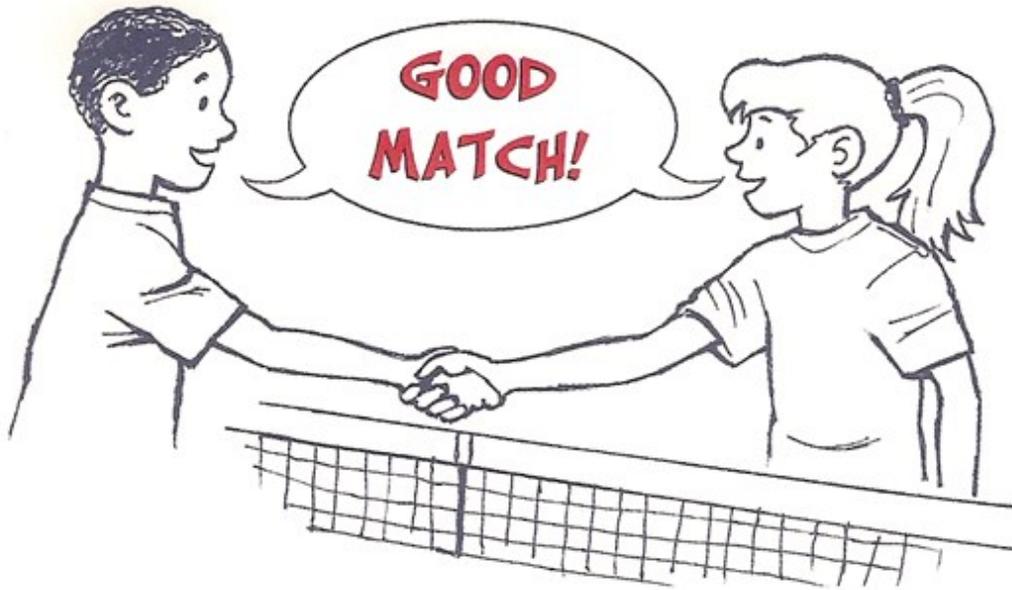


If your ball goes into the next court, for safety purposes, suggest stopping play on the other court. If a ball comes onto your court, return it as soon as play has stopped on both courts.

40 LOVE 30 - 15 30 LOVE 30 LOVE



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.

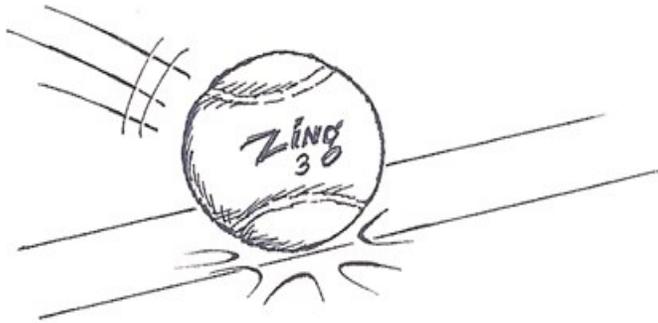


After the last point, come to the net quickly and shake hands. Let your opponent know that you appreciated the match, no matter what the outcome. If you and your opponent follow the rules of tennis and treat each other with respect, you'll both get the most enjoyment from the game, regardless of who wins.

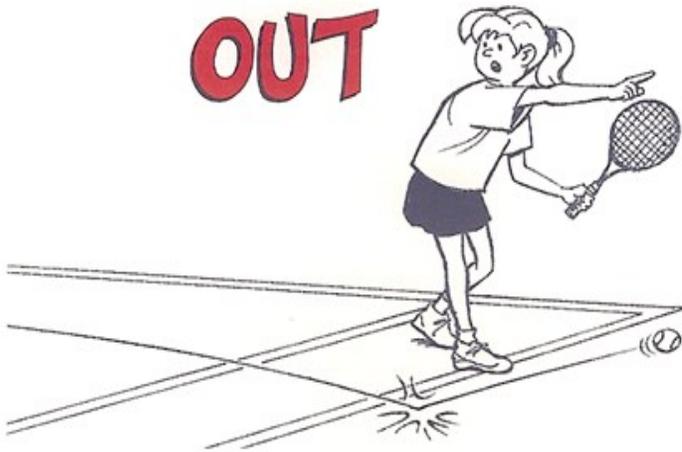
After thanking your opponent and your partner then give a big thanks to the scorekeeper who has donated their time.

Pick up your equipment and exit the court as quickly as possible so that the next match can begin.

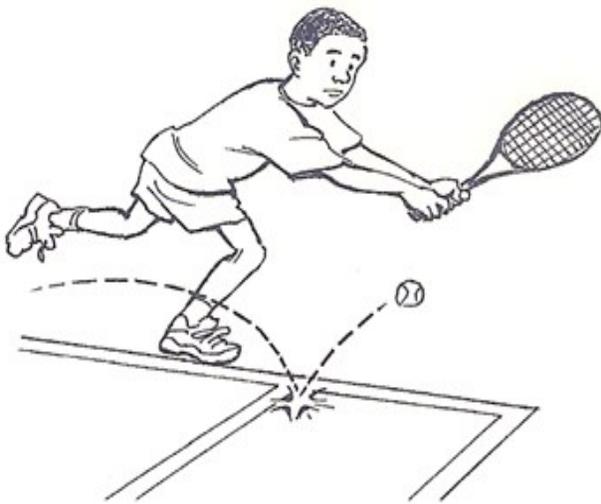
7. Calling Lines



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.



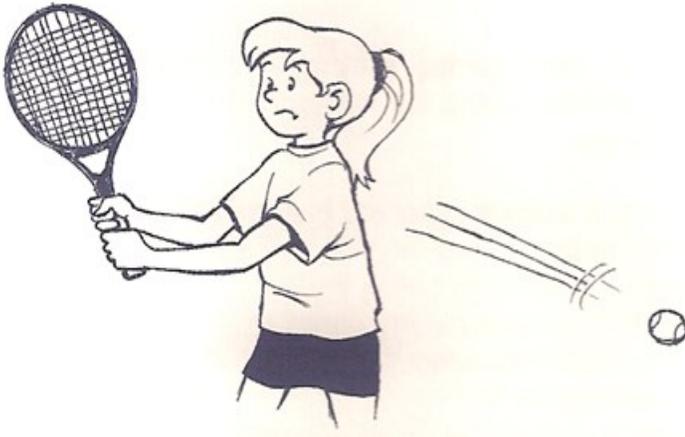
You should make calls for balls hit to your side of the court. Out calls should be made immediately and loudly.



If you can't see that a ball is definitely out, you should continue playing the point.



If later on you see by a mark on the court that a ball you played was out, you can't change your mind and call it out. The point stands as played.

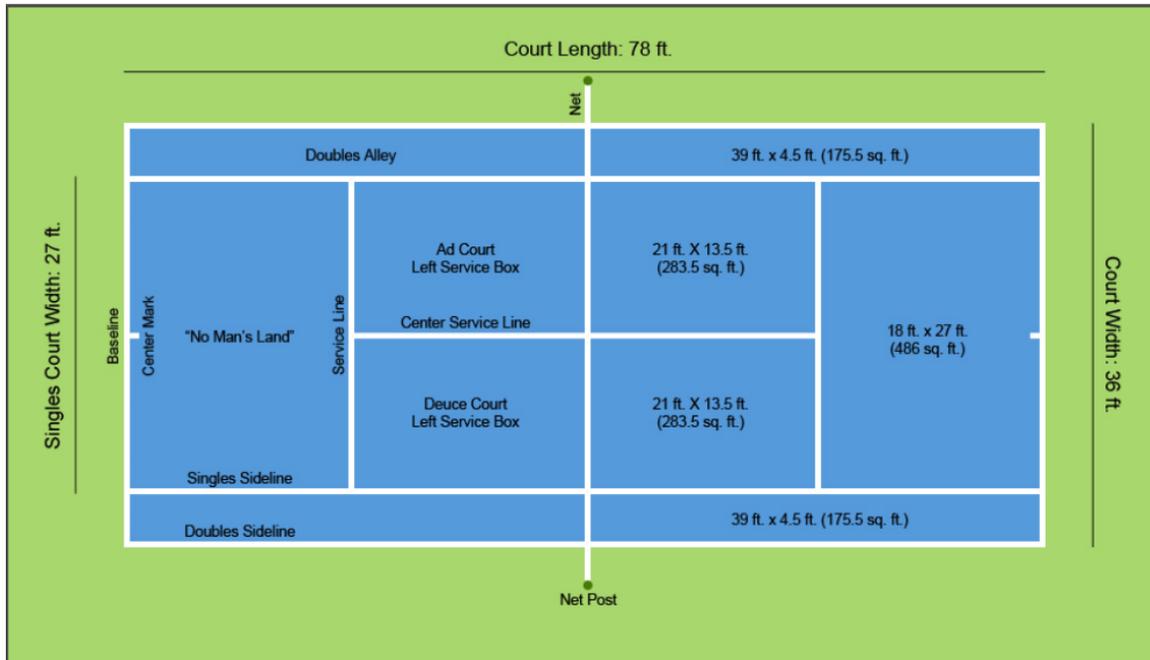


If a ball goes past you and you can't see where it lands, you must give the point to your opponent unless your partner is in a position to call it out.



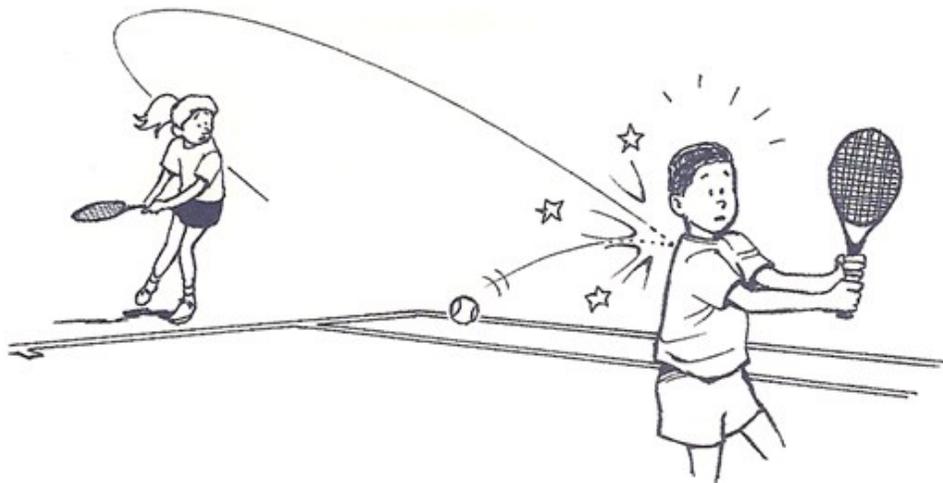
You lose the point if you catch the ball on the fly, no matter where you think it might land and even if you are standing outside of the court.

8. Playing Doubles

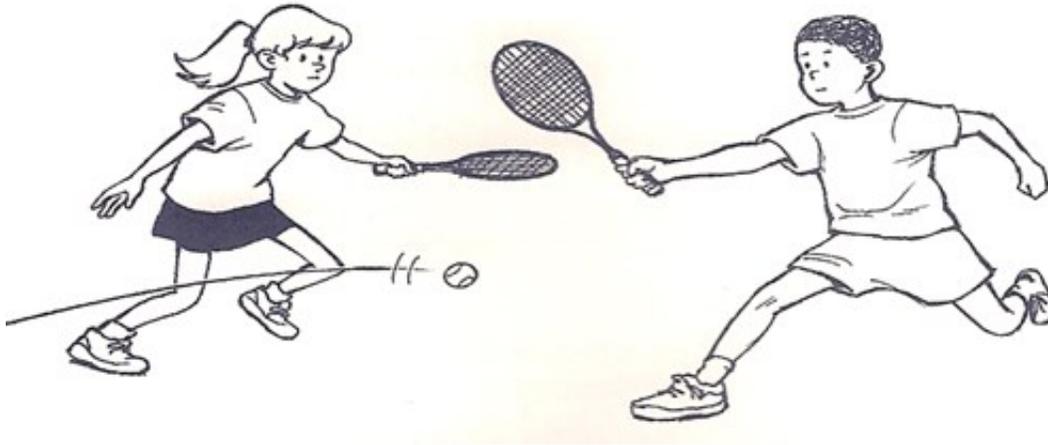


In doubles, you and a partner play against a team of two players on the other side of the net, using the full court between the baselines and the doubles sidelines.

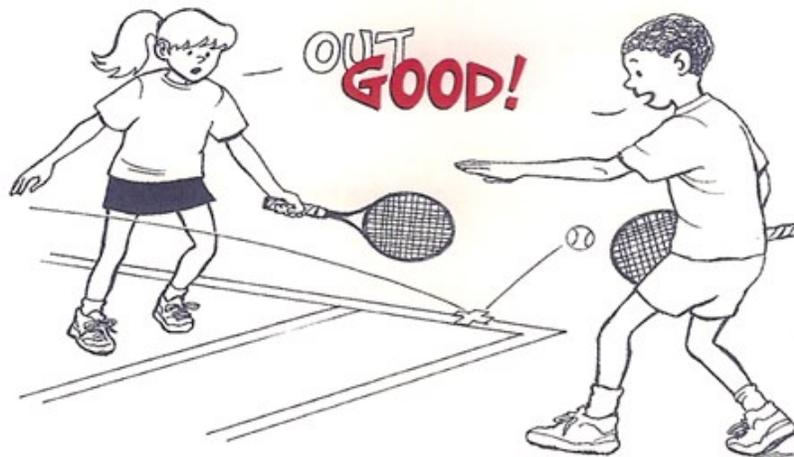
If you are on the team that serves first, either you or your partner may begin the match by serving the first ball. Either person on the opposing team may receive the first ball in the right (or deuce) court. When it is your team's turn to receive, you can choose which player will receive the first ball. You must then keep the same order of serving and the same sides for receiving for the whole set.



If the server's partner is hit with the serve, a fault is called. If the receiver's partner is hit with the serve, the server wins the point



In returning shots (except the serve), either member of a doubles team may hit the ball. Generally, the player with the best opportunity of returning the shot should be hitting the ball.



You should help your partner with line calls. If you think your partner called out actually hit the line, you must call it good. If neither person sees where the ball hits it should be called **Good**. Calls should be called immediately.

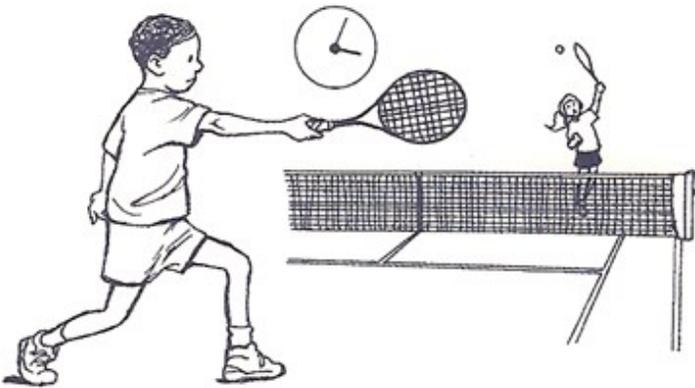
Partners:

1. Doubles requires a partner, so use and support their effort.
2. You can't win by yourself, involve your partner.
3. Remember we all make mistakes and we know when we do.
4. Criticism leads to bad feelings and decreases your chance of winning the game.

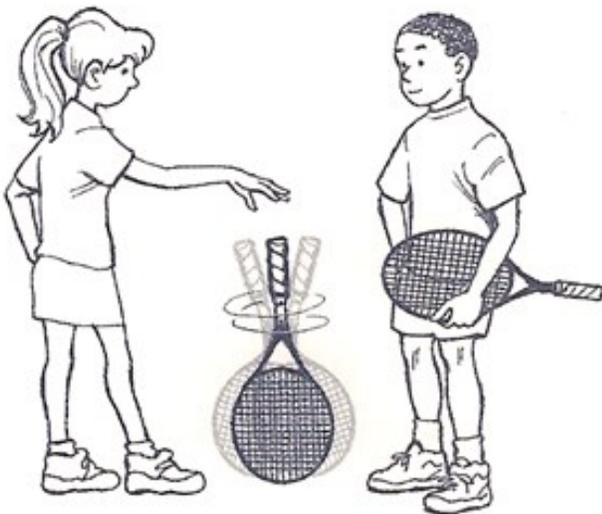
9. Starting a Game



Introduce yourself to your opponents.

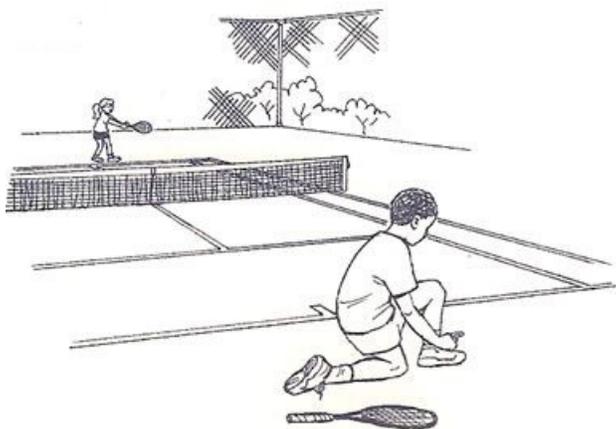


Limit the warm-up before a match to approximately five minutes. Hit the ball back and forth with your opponent. Then each player should take practice serves before play begins.



To see who serves first, spin your racquet or toss a coin. If your choice wins, you may: (1) Choose to serve or receive first. (2) Choose which end of the court you want to start playing on, or (3) Require your opponents to choose first.

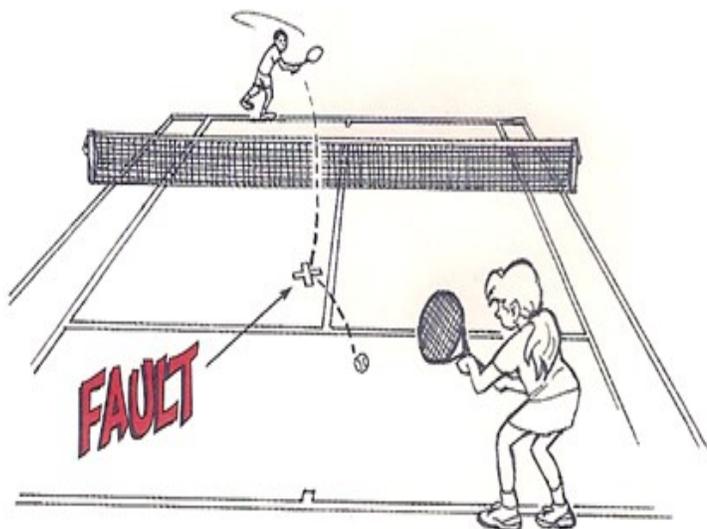
10. Serving



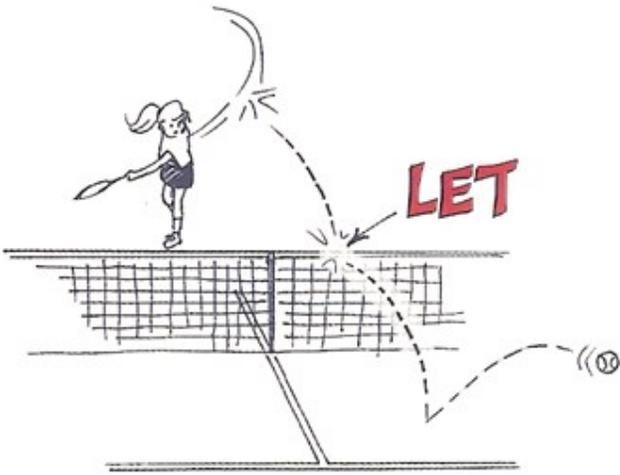
Before serving, be sure that the receiver is ready to play.



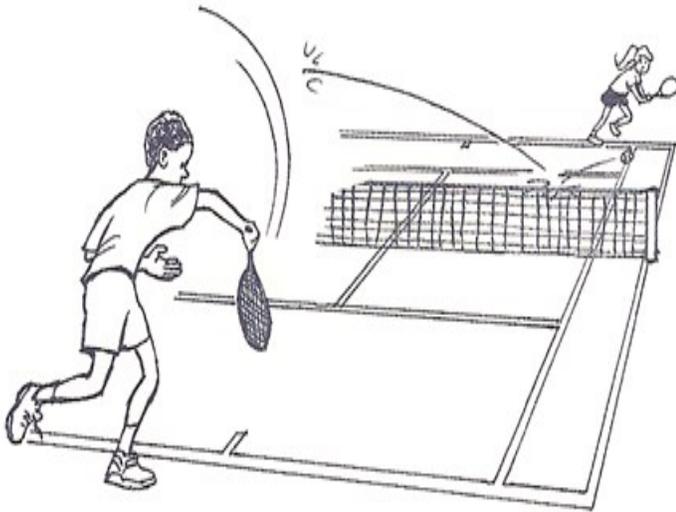
When serving the first point, stand behind the baseline between the center mark and the right sideline. When serving, you're not allowed to step on or over the baseline before hitting the ball.



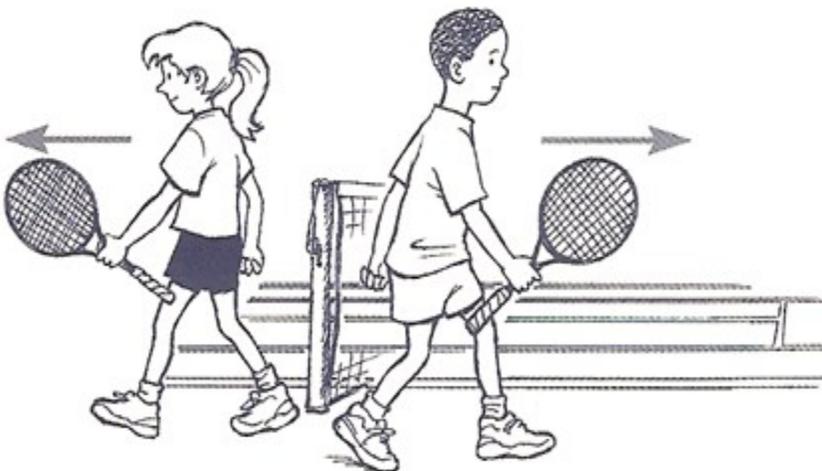
The first serve must go over the net into the receiver's right service court. If your first serve doesn't go into the correct court, it's called a **Fault**. Don't worry. You get a second chance. If you miss the second serve, your opponent wins the point.



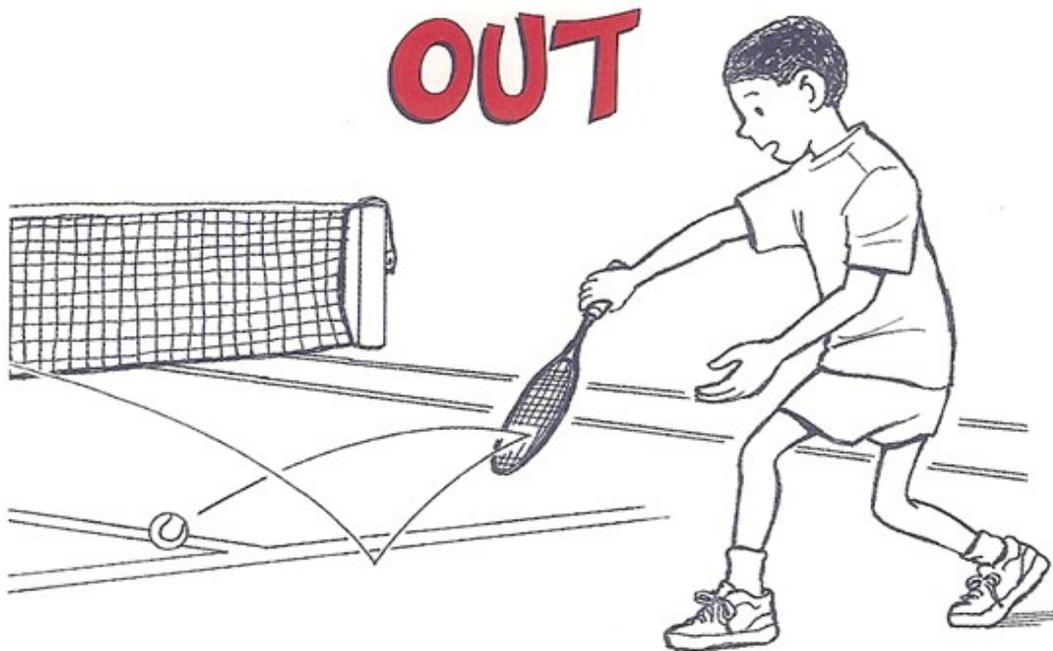
If you serve a ball that hits the top of the net before bouncing into the correct service court, it's called a **Let**. You may take that serve again. If it hits the net and then goes outside the correct service court, it's a fault. A served ball hitting the post is also a fault.



When serving the next point, stand behind the baseline between the center mark and the left sideline. The ball must go across the net into the receiver's left service court.



After you have served one game in a set, you switch ends of the court and now receive your opponent's serve for one game. You switch ends again after the third, fifth, and every following odd-numbered game.



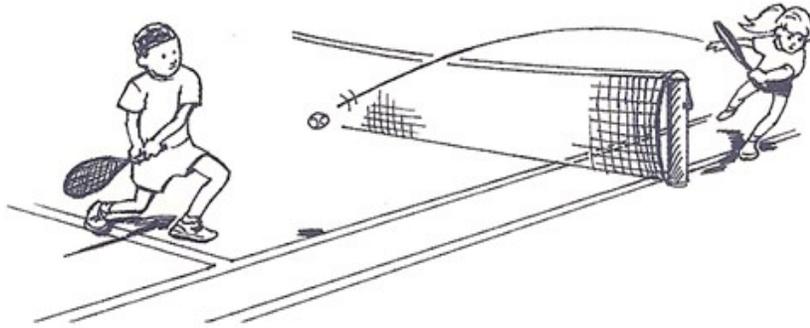
When receiving a serve, if it is out, don't return it unless you can't avoid doing so. Just tap it gently into the net or let it go behind you.

The server keeps two balls and their partner keeps one. After the serve the partner gives their ball to server and retrieves the other ball from the court. If the receiving side retrieves a ball they give it to the server's partner - make sure that they are ready **so time is not lost running around the court picking up balls.**

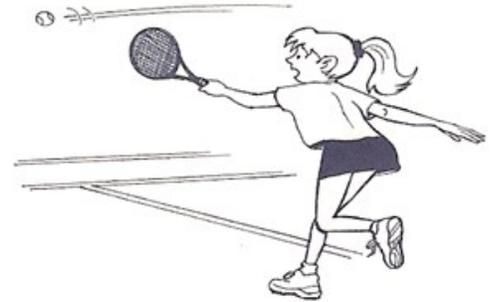
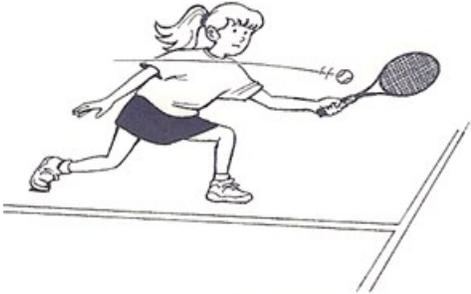
When a serve hits the net or is called "out", return ball to the net or pick it up if it is handy. Don't chase the ball around the court - the objective is to keep the game moving.

Make sure a loose ball is not in the way of court play or presents a danger for someone to fall.

11. Playing a Point

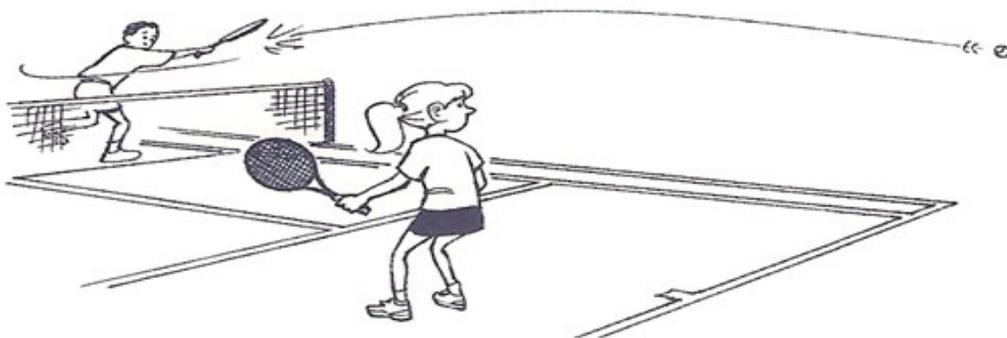


Except when serving, you may stand anywhere - in or out of the court - on your side of the net.



Except when receiving serve, you have the choice of hitting the ball on your side before it bounces or after one bounce. When receiving serve, you must let the ball bounce once before hitting it.

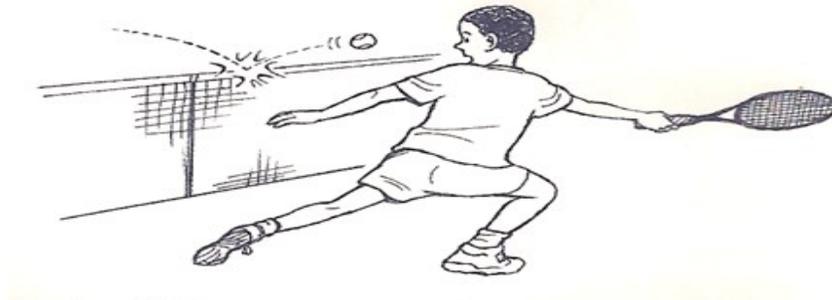
You win the point if you hit the ball over the net into the court on the other side and your opponent doesn't return it.



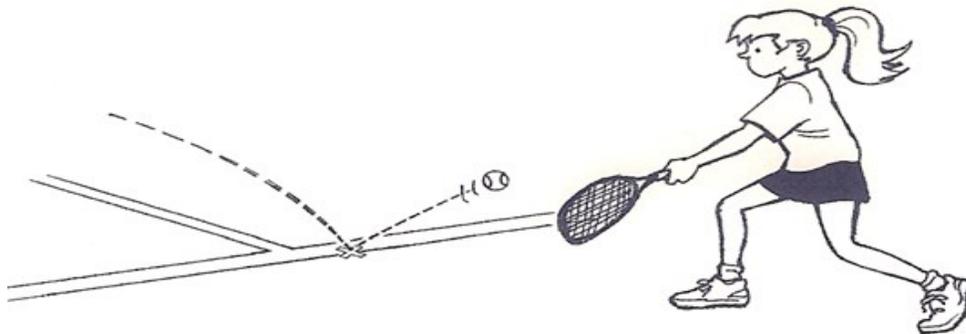
You lose the point if you hit the ball into the net or out of the court (unless your opponent plays the ball in the air before it lands outside the court boundaries).



You also lose the point if the ball touches you or your clothing, if you or your racquet touches the net or post, if you hit a ball before it passes the net, or if you deliberately hit the ball more than once. You're on your honor to make these call against yourself.



A ball is still in play if it happens to touch the net or post except on a serve.



Continue to play a ball that lands on or touches a boundary line of the court. The ball is good.

12. Scoring: Game - Set - Match

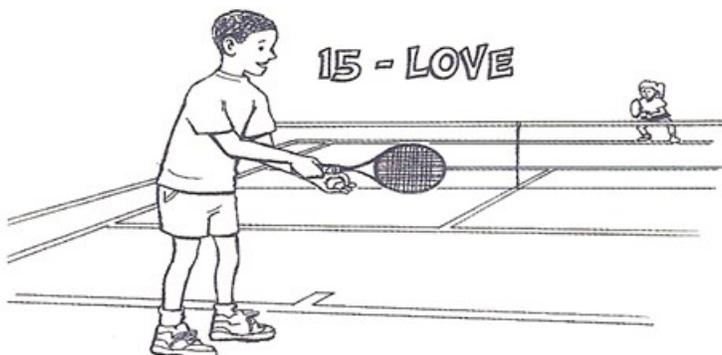
When you're ready to begin playing a game, you'll need to know how to score. This may seem a bit confusing at first, but once you master what each point is worth and a few terms, you'll have no problem.

The first thing you 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.

Two terms you should know right up front are **Love** and **All**. In tennis, **Love** means zero and **All** means the score is tied.

Scoring a game by the traditional scoring method:

If the serving side wins the first point it is 15 - Love, win the second point it is 30 - Love. Lose the next point and it is 30 - 15. The serving side wins the next point it is 40 - 15. If the serving side wins the next point the game is over.



The server should call the game's score before each point is served in a loud enough voice so that the receiver can hear it.

DEUCE

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

Scoring a Set and the Match:

The first team to win six games and is ahead by at least two games wins a **Set**. If the score reaches six games **all**, you may play a Tiebreak. In a set tiebreak, the first team to reach seven points with a margin of two points wins the game. Whoever wins the tiebreak wins the set.

The first team to win two sets, in the best of three, wins the match. If each wins a set then there is a match tiebreak.

Coman Tiebreak Procedure:

The Coman Tiebreak ensures that a server in doubles will serve on the same side that they have been serving on for the whole set. It also equalizes difficult playing factors such as strong wind and sun conditions.

Set Tiebreak: First to 7 points, win by 2 point margin

Match Tiebreak: First to 10 points, win by 2 point margin

13. Glossary of Tennis Terms

ACE - A ball that is served so well that the opponent cannot touch it.

AD - Short for **Advantage**. It is the point scored after Deuce. If the serving side scores, it is **Ad-in**; if the receiving side scores, it is **Ad-out**.

ALL - An even score: 30-all, 3-all, etc.

ALLEY - The area between the singles and doubles sidelines on each side of the court. The singles court is made wider for doubles play by the addition of the alley.

APPROACH - The shot hit by a player just before coming to the net that puts the opponent on the defensive.

BACKCOURT - The area between the service line and the baseline.

BACKHAND - The stroke used to return balls hit to the left side of a right-handed player and to the right side of a left-handed player.

BACKSPIN - The backward rotation of the ball caused by hitting high to low under the ball. Also, slice or cut.

BASELINE - The court's back line that runs parallel to the net and perpendicular with the sidelines.

CHOKE-UP - To grip the racquet up toward the head.

CROSS-COURT SHOT - A ball hit across the court diagonally from one side to the other.

DEEP SHOT - A shot that bounces near the baseline (near the service line on a serve).

DEUCE - A score of 40-40 (the score is tied and each side has won at least three points).

DEUCE COURT - The right court, so called because on a deuce score the ball is served there.

DOUBLE FAULT - The failure of both service attempts. The server loses the point.

DOUBLES - A match with four players, two on each team.

DOWN-THE-LINE SHOT - A ball that follow the path of a sideline.

DROP SHOT - A softly hit ball with lots of backspin that lands near the net after crossing it.

FAULT - A served ball that does not land in the proper court.

FIFTEEN - The score of a player who has won one point.

FLAT SHOT - A shot that travels in a straight line with little arc and little spin.

FOOT FAULT - A fault called against the server for stepping on the baseline or into the court with either foot during delivery of the service.

FORECOURT - The area between the service line and the net.

FOREHAND - The stroke used to return balls hit to the right of a right-handed player and to the left of a left-handed player.

FORTY - The score of a player who has won three points.

GAME - The part of a set that is completed when one player or side either wins four points and is at least two points ahead of their opponents, or wins two points in a row after deuce.

GOOD BALL - Applies to a ball in play that lands in the court (or on any part of a line forming the boundary of the court).

GROUND STROKES - Strokes made after the ball has bounced, either forehand or backhand.

HALF-VOLLEY - The stroke made by hitting a ball immediately after it has touched the ground.

LET - A point played over because of interference. Also, a serve that hits the top of the net but is otherwise good, in which case that serve is taken again.

LOB - A stroke that lifts the ball high in the air, usually over the head of the net player.

LOB VOLLEY - A volleying stroke hit over the head of the opponent.

LOVE - A score of zero.

MATCH -The overall contest, usually decided by the best two out of three sets.

NET GAME - Play in the forecourt close to the net.

NO-AD - A system of scoring a game in which the first player to win four points wins the game. If the score reaches 40-40 (or 3-all), the next point decides the game.

OUT - A ball landing outside the boundary lines of the court or, on the serve, outside the boundary lines of the receiver's service court.

OVERHEAD - During play, a stroke made with the racquet above the head.

POACH - To hit a ball in doubles, usually at the net, that would normally have been played by one's partner.

POINT - The smallest unit of score, which is awarded to a player when the opponent does not make a good return.

RALLY - A series of good hits made successively by players. Also, the practice procedure in which players hit the ball back and forth to each other.

RECEIVER - The player who receives the service.

SERVE - Short for **Service**. It is the act of putting the ball into play.

SERVER - The player who serves.

SERVICE BREAK - A game won by the opponents of the server.

SET - A scoring unit awarded to a player or team that has won: (a) six or more games and has a two-game lead, or (b) six games and the tiebreak game when played at 6-all.

SHOT - The hitting of the ball across the net and into the opposing court.

SINGLES - A match between two players.

SMASH - A hard overhead shot.

SPIN - Rotation of the ball.

STROKE - The act of striking the ball with the racquet.

THIRTY - The score of a player who has won two points.

TIEBREAK GAME - A system used to decide a tied set or match.

TOPSPIN - Forward rotation of the ball caused by hitting from low to high.

TOURNAMENT - A formal type of competition.

VOLLEY - During play, a stroke made by hitting the ball before it has touched the ground.