



The Laws of Table Tennis

These laws conform substantially to the ITTF Laws and Regulations for International Competition. Minor modifications applicable to USATT competition are included.

2.1 The Table

2.1.1 The upper surface of the table, known as the playing surface, shall be rectangular, 2.74m long and 1.525m wide, and shall lie in a horizontal plane 76cm above the floor.

2.1.2 The playing surface shall not include the vertical sides of the tabletop.

2.1.3 The playing surface may be of any material and shall yield a uniform bounce of about 23cm when a standard ball is dropped on to it from a height of 30cm.

2.1.4 The playing surface shall be uniformly dark colored and matt, but with a white side line, 2cm wide, along each 2.74m edge and a white end line, 2cm wide, along each 1.525m edge.

2.1.5 The playing surface shall be divided into 2 equal courts by a vertical net running parallel with the end lines, and shall be continuous over the whole area of each court.

2.1.6 For doubles, each court shall be divided into 2 equal half-courts by a white centre line, 3mm wide, running parallel with the side lines; the centre line shall be regarded as part of each right half-court.

2.2 The Net Assembly

2.2.1 The net assembly shall consist of the net, its suspension and the supporting posts, including the clamps attaching them to the table.

2.2.2 The net shall be suspended by a cord attached at each end to an

upright post 15.25cm high, the outside limits of the post being 15.25cm outside the side line.

2.2.3 The top of the net, along its whole length, shall be 15.25cm above the playing surface.

2.2.4 The bottom of the net, along its whole length, shall be as close as possible to the playing surface and the ends of the net shall be **attached to the supporting posts from top to bottom.**

2.3 The Ball

2.3.1 The ball shall be spherical, with a diameter of 40mm.

2.3.2 The ball shall weigh 2.7g.

2.3.3 The ball shall be made of celluloid or similar plastics material and shall be white or orange, and matt.

2.4 The Racket

2.4.1 The racket may be of any size, shape or weight but the blade shall be flat and rigid.

2.4.2 At least 85% of the blade by thickness shall be of natural wood; an adhesive layer within the blade may be reinforced with fibrous material such as carbon fiber, glass fiber or compressed paper, but shall not be thicker than 7.5% of the total thickness or 0.35mm, whichever is the smaller.

2.4.3 A side of the blade used for striking the ball shall be covered with either ordinary pimples rubber, with pimples outwards having a total thickness including adhesive of not more than 2mm, or sandwich rubber, with pimples inwards or outwards, having a total thickness including adhesive of not more than 4mm.

2.4.3.1 Ordinary pimples rubber is a single layer of non-cellular rubber,

natural or synthetic, with pimples evenly distributed over its surface at a density of not less than 10 per sq. cm and not more than 30 per sq. cm.

2.4.3.2 Sandwich rubber is a single layer of cellular (sponge) rubber covered with a single outer layer of ordinary pimples rubber, the thickness of the pimples rubber not being more than 2mm.

2.4.4 The covering material shall extend up to but not beyond the limits of the blade, except that the part nearest the handle and gripped by the fingers may be left uncovered or covered with any material.

2.4.5 The blade, any layer within the blade and any layer of covering material or adhesive on a side used for striking the ball shall be continuous and of even thickness.

2.4.6 The surface of the covering material on a side of the blade, or of a side of the blade if it is left uncovered, shall be matt, bright red on one side and black on the other.

2.4.7 The racket covering shall be used without any physical, chemical or other treatment.

2.4.8 At the start of a match and whenever s/he changes his/her racket during a match a player shall show the opponent and the umpire the racket s/he is about to use and shall allow them to examine it.

2.5 Definitions

2.5.1 A rally is the period during which the ball is in play.

2.5.2 The ball is in play from the last moment at which it is stationary on the palm of the free hand before being intentionally projected in service until the rally is decided as a let or a point.

2.5.3 A let is a rally of which the result is not scored.

2.5.4 A point is a rally of which the result is scored.

2.5.5 The racket hand is the hand carrying the racket.

2.5.6 The free hand is the hand not carrying the racket; the free arm is the arm of the free hand.

2.5.7 A player strikes the ball if s/he touches it in play with his/her racket, held in the hand, or with his/her racket hand below the wrist.

2.5.8 A player obstructs the ball if s/he, or anything s/he wears or carries, touches it in play when it is above or traveling towards the playing surface, not having touched his/her court since last being struck by the opponent.

2.5.9 The server is the player due to strike the ball first in a rally.

2.5.10 The receiver is the player due to strike the ball second in a rally.

2.5.11 The umpire is the person appointed to control a match.

2.5.12 The assistant umpire is the person appointed to assist the umpire with certain decisions.

2.5.13 Anything that a player wears or carries includes anything that s/he was wearing or carrying, other than the ball, at the start of the rally.

2.5.14 The ball shall be regarded as passing over or around the net assembly if it passes anywhere other than between the net and the net post or between the net and the playing surface.

2.5.15 The end line shall be regarded as extending indefinitely in both directions.

2.6 The Service

2.6.1 Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary free hand.

2.6.2 The server shall then project the ball near vertically upwards, without imparting spin, so that it rises at least 16cm after leaving the palm of the free hand and then falls without touching anything before being struck.

2.6.3 As the ball is falling the server shall strike it so that it touches first the court and then, after passing over or around the net assembly, touches directly the receiver's court; in doubles, the ball shall touch successively the right half court of server and receiver.

2.6.4 From the start of service until it is struck, the ball shall be above the level of the playing surface and behind the server's end line, and it shall not be hidden from the receiver by the server or his/her doubles partner and by anything they wear or carry.

2.6.5 As soon as the ball has been projected, the server's free arm and hand shall be removed from the space between the ball and the net.

Note: The space between the ball and the net is defined by the ball, the net and its indefinite upward extension.

2.6.6 It is the responsibility of the player to serve so that the umpire or the assistant umpire can be satisfied that s/he complies with the requirements of the law, and either may decide that a service is incorrect.

2.6.6.1 If either the umpire or the assistant umpire **is not sure about** the legality of a service s/he may, on

the first occasion in a match, interrupt play and warn the server; but any subsequent service by that player or his/her doubles partner which is not clearly legal shall be considered incorrect.

2.6.7 Exceptionally, the umpire may relax the requirements for a good service where s/he is satisfied that compliance is prevented by the player's physical disability.

Note See also 2.9.1.5 for serving to a player in a wheelchair.

2.7 The Return

2.7.1 The ball, having been served or returned, shall be struck so that it passes over or around the net assembly and touches the opponent's court, either directly or after touching the net assembly.

2.8 The Order of Play

2.8.1 In singles, the server shall first make a service, the receiver shall then make a return and thereafter server and receiver alternately shall each make a return.

2.8.2 In doubles, the server shall first make a service, the receiver shall then make a return, the partner of the server shall then make a return, the partner of the receiver shall then make a return and thereafter each player in turn in that sequence shall make a return.

2.8.3 ***In doubles, when at least one player of a pair is in a wheelchair due to a physical disability***, the server shall first make a service, the receiver shall then make a return, but thereafter either player of that pair may make returns. However no part of a player's wheelchair ***nor a foot of a standing player of this pair*** shall protrude beyond the imaginary extension of the centre line of the table. If it does, the umpire shall award the point to the opposing pair.

2.9 A Let

2.9.1 The rally shall be a let

2.9.1.1 if in service the ball, in passing over or around the net assembly, touches it, provided the service is otherwise good or the ball is obstructed by the receiver or his/her partner;

2.9.1.2 if the service is delivered when the receiving player or pair is not ready, provided that neither the receiver nor his/her partner attempts to strike the ball;

2.9.1.3 if failure to make a service or a return or otherwise to comply with the Laws is due to a disturbance outside the control of the player;

2.9.1.4 if play is interrupted by the umpire or assistant umpire.

2.9.1.5 if the receiver is in a wheelchair due to a physical disability and the ball

2.9.1.5.1 after touching the receiver's court returns in the direction of the net;

2.9.1.5.2 comes to rest on the receiver's half;

2.9.1.5.3 in singles leaves the receiver's half after touching it by either of its sidelines.

2.9.2 Play may be interrupted

2.9.2.1 to correct an error in the order of serving, receiving or ends;

2.9.2.2 to introduce the expedite system;

2.9.2.3 to warn or penalize a player or adviser;

2.9.2.4 because the conditions of play are disturbed in a way which could affect the outcome of the rally.

2.10 A Point

2.10.1 Unless the rally is a let, a player shall score a point

2.10.1.1 if the opponent fails to make a correct service;

2.10.1.2 if the opponent fails to make a correct return;

2.10.1.3 if, after s/he has made a service or a return, the ball touches anything other than the net assembly before being struck by the opponent;

2.10.1.4 if the ball passes over his/her court or beyond his/her end line without touching his/her court, after being struck by the opponent;

2.10.1.5 if the opponent obstructs the ball;

2.10.1.6 if the opponent intentionally strikes the ball twice successively;

2.10.1.7 if the opponent strikes the ball with a side of the racket blade whose surface does not comply with the requirements of 2.4.3, 2.4.4 and 2.4.5;

2.10.1.8 if the opponent, or anything the opponent wears or carries, moves the playing surface;

2.10.1.9 if the opponent, or anything the opponent wears or carries, touches the net assembly;

2.10.1.10 if the opponent's free hand touches the playing surface;

2.10.1.11 if a doubles opponent strikes the ball out of the sequence established by the first server and first receiver;

2.10.1.12 as provided under the expedite system (2.15.2).

2.10.1.13 if both players or pairs are in a wheelchair due to a physical disability and

2.10.1.13.1 the opponent does not maintain a minimum contact with the seat or cushion(s), with the back of the thigh, when the ball is struck;

2.10.1.13.2 the opponent touches the table with either hand before striking the ball;

2.10.1.13.3 the opponent's footrest or foot touches the floor during play.

2.11 A Game

2.11.1 A game shall be won by the player or pair first scoring 11 points unless both players or pairs score 10 points, when the game shall be won by the first player or pair subsequently gaining a lead of 2 points.

2.12 A Match

2.12.1 A match shall consist of the best of any odd number of games.

2.13 The Order of Serving, receiving, and ends

2.13.1 The right to choose the initial order of serving, receiving and ends shall be decided by lot and the winner may choose to serve or to receive first or to start at a particular end.

2.13.2 When one player or pair has chosen to serve or to receive first or to start at a particular end, the other player or pair shall have the other choice.

2.13.3 After each 2 points have been scored the receiving player or pair shall become the serving player or pair and so on until the end of the game, unless both players or pairs score 10 points or the expedite system is in operation, when the

sequences of serving and receiving shall be the same but each player shall serve for only 1 point in turn.

2.13.4 In each game of a doubles match, the pair having the right to serve first shall choose which of them will do so and in the first game of a match the receiving pair shall decide which of them will receive first; in subsequent games of the match, the first server having been chosen, the first receiver shall be the player who served to him in the preceding game.

2.13.5 In doubles, at each change of service the previous receiver shall become the server and the partner of the previous server shall become the receiver.

2.13.6 The player or pair serving first in a game shall receive first in the next game of the match and in the last possible game of a doubles match the pair due to receive next shall change their order of receiving when first one pair scores 5 points.

2.13.7 The player or pair starting at one end in a game shall start at the other end in the next game of the match and in the last possible game of a match the players or pairs shall change ends when first one player or pair scores 5 points.

2.14 Out of Order of Serving, Receiving or Ends

2.14.1 If a player serves or receives out of turn, play shall be interrupted by the umpire as soon as the error is discovered and shall resume with those players serving and receiving who should be server and receiver respectively at the score that has been reached, according to the sequence established at the beginning of the match and, in

doubles, to the order of serving chosen by the pair having the right to serve first in the game during which the error is discovered.

2.14.2 If the players have not changed ends when they should have done so, play shall be interrupted by the umpire as soon as the error is discovered and shall resume with the players at the ends at which they should be at the score that has been reached, according to the sequence established at the beginning of the match.

2.14.3 In any circumstances, all points scored before the discovery of an error shall be reckoned.

2.15 The Expedite System

2.15.1 Except as provided in 2.15.2, the expedite system shall come into operation after 10 minutes' play in a game or at any time when requested by both players or pairs.

2.15.2 The expedite system shall not be introduced in a game if 18 points have been scored.

2.15.3 If the ball is in play when the time limit is reached, play shall be interrupted by the umpire and shall resume with service by the player who served in the rally that was interrupted; if the ball is not in play when the expedite system comes into operation, play shall resume with service by the player who received in the immediately preceding rally.

2.15.4 Thereafter, each player shall serve for 1 point in turn until the end of the game, and if the receiving player or pair makes 13 returns in a rally the receiver shall score a point.

2.15.5 Introduction of the expedite system shall not alter the order of

serving and receiving in the match, as defined in 2.13.6.

2.15.6 Once introduced, the expedite system shall remain in operation until the end of the match.

3.2 Equipment and playing conditions

3.2.1.3 The covering material on a side of the blade used for striking the ball shall be of a brand and type currently authorized by the ITTF and shall be attached to the blade so that the brand and the ITTF logo are clearly visible near the edge of the striking surface.

3.2.1.3.1 In US tournaments all racket coverings must be USATT or ITTF approved.

3.2.2 Playing Clothing

3.2.2.1 Playing clothing shall normally consist of a short-sleeved or sleeveless shirt and shorts or skirt or one-part sports outfits, socks and playing shoes; other garments, such as part or all of a track suit, shall not be worn during play except with the permission of the referee

3.2.2.2 The main color of a shirt, skirt or shorts, other than sleeves and collar of a shirt shall be clearly different from that of the ball in use.

3.2.2.8 The players of a team taking part in a team match, and players of the same Association forming a doubles pair in a World or Olympic Title Competition, shall be dressed uniformly, with the possible exception of socks, shoes and the number, size, color and design of advertisements on clothing. Players of the same Association forming a doubles pair in other international competitions may wear clothes of different manufacturers, if the basic colors are the same and their

National Association authorizes this procedure.

3.2.2.9 Opposing players and pairs shall wear shirts that are of sufficiently different colors to enable them to be easily distinguished by spectators.

3.2.2.9.1 Tournaments have the option to disregard this requirement but are encouraged to enforce it in the late rounds.

3.2.2.10 Where opposing players or teams have a similar shirt and cannot agree which of them will change, the decision shall be made by the umpire by lot.

3.2.5 Advertisements

3.2.5.10 Advertisements on playing clothing shall be limited to

3.2.5.10.1 the maker's normal trademark, symbol or name contained within a total area of 24cm²;

3.2.5.10.2 not more than 6 clearly separated advertisements, contained within a combined total area of 600 cm², on the front, side or shoulder of a shirt, with not more than 4 advertisements on the front;

3.2.5.10.3 not more than 2 advertisements, contained within a total area of 400cm², on the back of a shirt;

3.2.5.10.4 not more than 2 advertisements, contained within a combined total area of 80cm², on shorts or skirt.

3.2.5.13 There shall be no advertisements on players' clothing or numbers for tobacco goods, alcoholic drinks or harmful drugs.

3.3 Match Officials

3.3.1 Referee - The specific duties of the Referee are detailed in the ITTF Handbook and in the USATT Tournament Guide

3.3.1.2 The Referee shall be responsible for:

3.3.1.2.3 appointing match officials.

3.3.1.2.6 deciding whether play may be suspended in an emergency;

3.3.1.4 The Referee, or a responsible deputy appointed to exercise authority in his/her absence, shall be present at all times during play.

3.3.1.6 Players shall be under the jurisdiction of the Referee from the time at which they arrive at the playing venue until they leave it.

3.3.2 Umpire, Assistant Umpire and Stroke Counter Detailed duties are included in the ITTF Handbook.

3.3.2.1 An Umpire and an Assistant umpire may be appointed for each match.

3.3.2.6 Either the Assistant Umpire or a separate official may act as stroke counter, to count the strokes of the receiving player or pair when the expedite system is in operation.

3.3.2.7 A decision made by assistant umpire or stroke counter in accordance with the provisions of 3.3.2.5-6 may not be overruled by the umpire.

3.3.2.8 Players shall be under the jurisdiction of the umpire from the time at which they arrive at the playing area until they leave it.

3.3.3.5 In an individual event, an appeal may be made only by a player participating in the match in which the question has arisen; in a team event an appeal may be made only by the captain of a team participating in the match in which the question has arisen. The name of the team captain, playing or non-playing, shall be designated beforehand to the umpire.

3.4 Match Conduct

3.4.1 Score Indication

3.4.1.1 The umpire shall call the score as soon as the ball is out of play at the completion of a rally, or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

3.4.1.1.1 In calling the score during a game the umpire shall call first the number of points scored by the player or pair due to serve in the next rally of the game and then the number of points scored by the opposing player or pair.

3.4.1.1.2 At the beginning of a game and when a change of server is due, the umpire shall point to the next server, and may also follow the score call with the next server's name.

3.4.1.1.3 At the end of a game the umpire shall name the winning player or pair and shall then call the number of points scored by the winning player or pair followed by the number of points scored by the losing player or pair.

3.4.1.2 In addition to calling the score the umpire may use hand signals to indicate decisions.

3.4.2 Equipment

3.4.2.1 Players shall not choose balls in the playing area.

3.4.2.1.1 Wherever possible, players shall be given the opportunity to choose one or more balls before coming to the playing area and the match shall be played with one of these balls, taken at random by the umpire.

3.4.2.1.2 If a ball has not been chosen before players come to the playing area, the match shall be played with a ball taken at random by the umpire from a box of those specified for the competition.

3.4.2.1.3 If a ball is damaged during a match, it shall be replaced by another of those chosen before the match or, if such a ball is not available, by one taken at random by the umpire from a box of those specified for the competition.

3.4.2.2 A racket shall not be replaced during an individual match unless it is accidentally damaged so badly that it cannot be used; if this happens the damaged racket shall be replaced immediately by another which the player has brought with him to the playing area or one that is handed to him in the playing area.

3.4.2.4 Unless otherwise authorized by the umpire, players shall leave their rackets on the table during intervals. **In all cases where the racket is strapped to the hand, the umpire shall allow the player to retain the racket strapped to the hand during intervals.**

3.4.3 Practice

3.4.3.1 Players are entitled to practice on the match table for up to 2 minutes immediately before the

start of a match but not during normal intervals; the specified practice period may be extended only with the permission of the Referee.

3.4.4 Intervals

3.4.4.1 Play shall be continuous throughout an individual match except that any player is entitled to

3.4.4.1.1 an interval of up to 1 minute between successive games of an individual match;

3.4.4.1.2 brief intervals for toweling after every 6 points from the start of each game and at the change of ends in the last possible game of an individual match.

3.4.4.2 A player or pair may claim one time-out period of up to 1 minute during an individual match.

3.4.4.2.1 In an individual event the request for a time-out may be made by the player or pair or by the designated adviser; in a team event it may be made by the player or pair or by the team captain.

3.4.4.2.2 If a player or pair and an adviser or captain disagree whether a time-out is to be taken, the final decision shall be made by the player or pair in an individual event and by the captain in a team event.

3.4.4.2.3 The request for a time-out, which may be made only between rallies in a game, shall be indicated by making a "T" sign with the hands or the hand and the racket.

3.4.4.2.4 play shall resume as soon as the player or pair making the request is ready to continue or at the end of 1 minute, whichever is sooner.

3.4.4.4 The Referee may allow a suspension of play, of the shortest

practical duration, and in no circumstances more than 10 minutes except for 3.4.4.6, if a player is temporarily incapacitated by an accident, provided that in the opinion of the Referee the suspension is not likely to be unduly disadvantageous to the opposing player or pair.

3.4.4.5 A suspension shall not be allowed for a disability which was present or was reasonably to be expected at the beginning of the match, or where it is due to the normal stress of play; disability such as cramp or exhaustion, caused by the player's current state of fitness or by the manner in which play has proceeded, does not justify such an emergency suspension, which may be allowed only for incapacity resulting from an accident, such as injury caused by a fall.

3.4.4.6 If anyone in the playing area is bleeding, play shall be suspended immediately and shall not resume until that person has received medical treatment and all traces of blood have been removed from the playing area.

3.4.4.7 Players shall remain in or near the playing area throughout an individual match, except with the permission of the Referee; during intervals between games and time-outs they shall remain within 3 meters of the playing area, under the supervision of the umpire.

3.5 Discipline

3.5.1 Advice

3.5.1.1 In a team event, players may receive advice from anyone **authorized to be at the playing area.**

3.5.1.2 In an individual event, a player or pair may receive advice

only from one person, designated beforehand to the umpire, except that where the players of a doubles pair are from different Associations each may designate an adviser, but with regard to 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 these two advisors shall be treated as a unit; if an unauthorized person gives advice the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him/her away from the playing area.

3.5.1.3 Players may receive advice only during the intervals between games or during other authorized suspension of play, and not between the end of practice and the start of a match; if any authorized person gives advice at other times the umpire shall hold up a yellow card to warn him/her that any further such offence will result in his/her dismissal from the playing area.

3.5.1.4 After a warning has been given, if in the same team match or the same match of an individual event anyone again gives advice illegally, the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him/her away from the playing area, whether or not s/he was the person warned.

3.5.2 Misbehavior

3.5.2.2 If at any time a player, a coach or another adviser commits a serious offence the umpire shall suspend play and report immediately to the Referee; for less serious offences the umpire may, on the first occasion, hold up a yellow card and warn the offender that any further offence is liable to incur penalties.

3.5.2.3 Except as provided in 3.5.2.2 and 3.5.2.5, if a player who has been warned commits a second offence in the same individual match or team match, the umpire shall award 1

point to the offender's opponent and for a further offence s/he shall award 2 points, each time holding up a yellow and a red card together.

3.5.2.4 If a player against whom 3 penalty points have been awarded in the same individual match or team match continues to misbehave, the umpire shall suspend play and report immediately to the Referee.

3.5.2.5 If a player changes a racket during an individual match when it has not been damaged, the umpire shall suspend play and report to the Referee.

3.5.2.6 A warning or penalty incurred by either player of a doubles pair shall apply to the pair, but not to the non-offending player in a subsequent individual match of the same team match; at the start of a doubles match the pair shall be regarded as having incurred the higher of any warnings or penalties incurred by either player in the same team match.

3.5.2.7 Except as provided in 3.5.2.2, if a coach or another adviser who has been warned commits a further offence in the same individual match or team match, the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him/her away from the playing area until the end of the team match or, in an individual event, of the individual match.

3.5.2.8 The Referee shall have power to disqualify a player from a match, an event or a competition for seriously unfair or offensive behavior, whether reported by the umpire or not; as s/he does so s/he shall hold up a red card.

3.5.2.12 If a player is disqualified from a match, event or

competition for any reason, s/he may forfeit any title, medal, prize money or rating points accordingly.

3.5.3 Good Presentation

3.5.3.1 Players, coaches and officials shall uphold the object of good presentation of the sport; in particular players have to do their utmost to win a match and shall not withdraw except for reasons of illness or injury.

3.5.3.2 Any player who deliberately fails to comply with these principles may be disciplined by total or partial loss of prize money in prize events and/or by suspension from USATT events.

4. Playing without an umpire

4.1 Non-umpired matches. The umpire, when one is assigned, is responsible for ensuring that the match is conducted fairly. The players are equally responsible for fair play in a match without an umpire. Specifically:

4.2 No "second chances" are allowed. A player will have only one chance to score a point. The most common situation is where another ball comes into the playing area during a rally. If a player then strikes the ball (perhaps a high set up) and misses the shot, the result of that shot must stand; the player cannot then call a let because s/he was disturbed. S/he took his/her chance and doesn't get another one.

4.3 It is both the obligation and prerogative of a player to call all balls to his/her side, to help the opponent make calls when the opponent requests it, and to call against him/herself any ball that s/he clearly

sees out on the opponent's side of the table.

4.4 Players in a non-umpired match should attempt to resolve problems by applying the above rules and good sportsmanship.

4.5 Any player in a match has the right to request that the Referee appoint an umpire for that match.

4.6 For an unresolved dispute, the player should call for an umpire immediately. Do not continue playing, and complain about it later. That will not change the result of the game or the match.

The Laws of Table Tennis

USA Table Tennis
4065 Sinton Road
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
719-866-4583 (Phone)
719-632-6071 (FAX)
admin@usatt.org
www.usatt.org

December 2013