

Table Tennis Rules

All rules are subject to change at the discretion of the LU IMS Administrative Staff.

Singles Play

I. General Rules

- The choice of playing position at the table and order of service are determined by the toss of a coin. If the winner of the toss prefers to have first choice of playing positions, the opponent then has the choice of whether to serve first or receive first, and vice versa.
- The change of service takes place after 5 points have been scored. A point is normally awarded when the play of a service is concluded. The receiver then becomes the server and the server becomes receiver, and so on, after each 5 points until the end of the game or the score is 20-all. Whenever the score becomes 20-all, the receiver becomes the server and the server the receiver, and so on after each point until the end of the game.
- At the start of a new game, the player who served first in the previous game becomes receiver and the receiver becomes server and so on, alternating after each game.
- The players exchange ends after each game, and if play consists of more than one game, in the deciding game of the match the players change ends when one player reaches a score of 10 points.
- A game is won by the player who first scores 21 points with a 2-point margin.
- A match consists of the best two (2) of three (3) games.

II. Service

- A good service is delivered by projecting the ball from the free hand, which must start from above the playing surface. The ball must be resting in the palm of the free hand. The ball is tossed into the air.
- As it starts to descend, the ball is struck so that it touches the server's court first and then, passing directly over or around the net, touches the receiver's court. At the instant of contact of the racquet on the ball in service, both handle and ball must be behind the end line of the server's court.
- A good return of a served ball must be struck by the receiver on the first bounce so that it passes directly over or around the net and touches directly on top of the opponent's court.

III. Points

- A point is awarded to the opponent in the following circumstances:
 - Failure to make a good service, unless a let is declared
 - Failure to make a good return of a good service or a good return made by the opponent, unless a let is declared
 - If the player, the racquet, or anything that the player wears or carries touches the net or its supports while the ball is in play.
 - If the player, the racquet, or any wearing apparel moves the playing surface while the ball is in play or touches the net or its supports
 - If the player's free hand touches the playing surface while the ball is in play

- If, after being struck by the opponent, the ball comes in contact with the player or anything the player wears or carries before it has passed over the end lines or sidelines, not yet having touched the playing surface on the player's side of the table.
- If at any time the player volleys the ball – that is before the ball hits the table top – except as provided in Rule A under “Let” (below).

IV. Let

- A let ball, which is then replayed, is called in the following cases:
 - If the served ball, in passing over the net, touches it or its supports, if the service would otherwise have been good or volleyed by the receiver.
 - If a service is delivered when the receiver is not ready
 - If either player is prevented by an accident not under his/her control from serving a good service or making a good return
 - If either player gives up a point, as provided in Rules C-G under “Points”, owing to an accident not within his/her control

V. Scoring

- A point is scored by the side that makes the last successful return prior to the end of a rally. An unsuccessful return occurs whenever the ball is missed, is hit off the table, sent into the net, or hit onto the player's own half of the court on the return. Failure to make a good serve also scores a point for the opponent unless it is a let.

VI. Ball in Play

- The ball is in play from the moment it is projected from the hand in service until one of the following has occurred:
 - It has touched one court twice consecutively.
 - It has, except in service, touched each court alternately without having been struck by the racquet immediately
 - It has been struck by either player more than once consecutively.
 - It has touched either player or anything that the player wears or carries.
 - It has touched any object other than the net and supports.

Doubles Play

I. Good Service

- The service is delivered (as described in Singles), except that it must touch first the right half of the server's court or the centerline on the server's side of the net and then, passing directly over or around the net, touch the right half of the receiver's court or the center line on the receiver's side of the table.

II. Choice of Order of Play

- The team winning a coin toss has the option of choosing:
 - The choice of ends
 - The right to receive or serve first
 - The right to require the losing team to make the first choice
 - After choice A & B have been made, the other team makes the remaining choice.

III. Order of Service

- The first five services must be delivered by the serving partner (Player 1) of the pair who has the right to do so. The service must be received by the receiving partner (Player 3) of the opposing pair.
- The second five services must be delivered by the receiver of the first five services (Player 3) and received by the partner of the server (Player 2) of the first five services.
- The third five services must be delivered by the partner of the first five services (Player 2) and received by the partner of the server (Player 4) of the first five services.
- The fourth five services must be delivered by the partner of the receiver (Player 4) of the first five services and received by the server (Player 1) of the first five services.
- The next five services start over as in Rule A of "Order of Service"