

Table Tennis Rules

Scoring

A point is won by a player when the opponent cannot hit the ball with a racket over the net and onto the other side of the table.

A game is won by being the first player to win 11 points, and be at least 2 points ahead of his or her opponent.

If both players have won 10 points, then the first player to get a 2 point lead wins the game.

A match is the best of 5 games.

How to Score a Table Tennis Match

The score begins at 0-0, and the server will serve first. Each player gets to serve for two points in a row, and then the other player has to serve.

The server must serve the ball so that it touches his side of the table once, then bounces over or around the net, and then touches his opponent's side of the table. A serve that touches the net assembly (the net, net posts, and net clamps) on the way, but still touches his side first and then the opponent's side on the second bounce, is called a let serve (or just let) and must be replayed, with no change to the score. There is no limit on how many lets the server can serve in a row.

The receiver will then attempt to return the ball over or around the net so that it bounces first on the server's side of the table. If he cannot, the server wins the point. If he does, the server must hit the ball over or around the net so that it bounces first on his opponent's side of the table. If the server cannot, the receiver wins the point. Play continues in this manner until either the server or the receiver cannot return the ball legally, in which case the other player wins the point.

When a point is won, that player adds one to his score. If a score of 10-all is reached, both players will only serve 1 serve each until the game is won. The score is called out with the server's score first.

In the final possible game of a match, when the first player (or doubles team) reaches 5 points, the players must change ends.

Service Rules

The intention of the service rules is to give the receiver the ability to see the ball at all times in order to have a fair chance of reading the spin put on the ball by the server. In order to make this happen, there are several rules that are enforced during the serve, including:

The ball must always be visible to the receiver throughout the serve - it must never be hidden.

The ball must be always be behind the end line of the table, and above the level of the playing surface.

The ball must be throw up near vertically at least 16cm (around the height of the net), and must be hit on the way down, not the way up.

If the umpire is doubtful whether a serve is legal, he may warn the player. If any more of the player's serves are of doubtful legality, the umpire will fault the player and award the point to his opponent.

If a serve is clearly illegal, the umpire will fault the player and give the point to his opponent.

Obstructing the Ball

An obstruction only occurs if a player touches the ball (with his bat, body or anything he is wearing), when the ball is above the playing surface, or traveling towards the playing surface, and has not yet touched his side of the court. (Law 2.5.8) It is not an obstruction if the ball has passed over the end line, has passed over the sideline going away from the table, or is moving away from the playing surface. So you can be hit by the ball in front of the end line and still not obstruct the ball, provided the ball is not over the playing surface and it is moving away from the table.

Hitting the Ball

It is legal to hit the ball with the fingers of your hand that is holding the racket, or even the racket hand below the wrist, provided that only one contact is made. Double hits are not allowed, so you may not hit the ball with the fingers of your racket hand, and then hit the ball with your racket.

It is legal to switch the racket between hands during the point, although it is rare to find a player that does this.

A player may not throw the racket at the ball in order to hit the ball.

If a player drops his racket, he must pick up the racket in order to hit the ball. The ball must be hit by a racket held in your racket hand, so if you drop the racket, you no longer have a racket hand!