

- The entire racquet must be of a fixed shape, size, weight, and weight distribution. There may not be any energy source built into the racquets.
- The racquets must not provide any kind of communication, instruction or advice to the player during the match.

The rules regarding racquets have changed over time, as material and engineering advances have been made. For example, the maximum length of the frame had been 32 inches until 1997, when it was shortened to 29 inches.^[37]



A tennis racquet and balls.

Many companies manufacture and distribute tennis racquets. Wilson, Head and Babolat are some of the more commonly used brands; however, many more companies exist. The same companies sponsor players to use these racquets in the hopes that the company name will become more well known by the public.

2.2 Balls

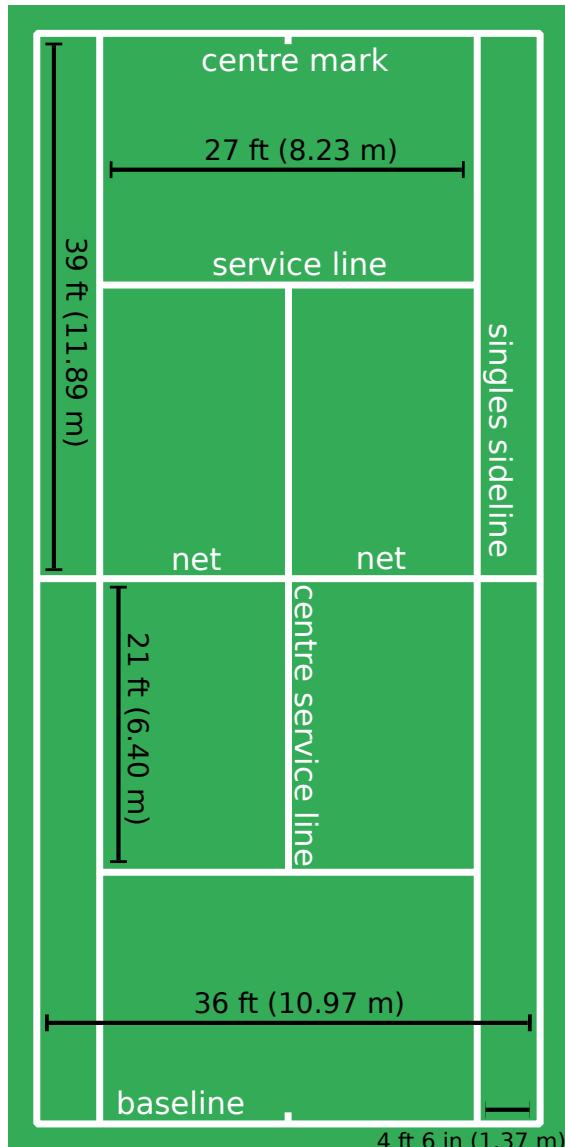
Main article: Tennis ball

Tennis balls have come a long way from being made of cloth strips stitched together with thread.^[38] Tennis balls are made of hollow **rubber** with a **felt** coating. Traditionally white, the predominant color was gradually changed to optic yellow in the latter part of the 20th century to allow for improved visibility. Tennis balls must conform to certain criteria for size, weight, **deformation**, and bounce to be approved for regulation play. The International Tennis Federation (ITF) defines the official diameter as 65.41-68.58 mm (2.575-2.700 inches). Balls must weigh between 56.0 and 59.4 grams (1.975-2.095 ounces).^[39] Tennis balls were traditionally manufactured in the **United States** and **Europe**. Although the process of producing the balls has remained virtually unchanged for the past 100 years, the majority of manufacturing now takes place in the Far East. The relocation is due to cheaper **labour** costs and materials in the region.^[40]

2.3 Miscellaneous

Advanced players improve their performance through a number of accoutrements. Vibration dampers may be interlaced in the proximal part of the string array for improved feel. Racquet handles may be customized with absorbent or rubber-like materials to improve the players' grip. Players often use sweat bands on their wrists to keep their hands dry as well. Finally, although the game can be played in a variety of shoes, specialized tennis shoes have wide, flat soles for stability and a built-up front structure to avoid excess wear.

3 Manner of play



The dimensions of a tennis court

For individual terms see: *Glossary of tennis*



Two players before a serve

3.1 Court

Main article: Tennis court

Tennis is played on a rectangular, flat surface, usually **grass**, **clay**, or a **hardcourt** of concrete, asphalt, or acrylic; occasionally carpet is used for indoor play. The court is 78 feet (23.77 m) long, and 27 feet (8.23 m) wide for singles matches and 36 ft (10.97 m) for doubles matches.^[41] Additional clear space around the court is required in order for players to reach overrun balls. A net is stretched across the full width of the court, parallel with the baselines, dividing it into two equal ends. It is held up by either a metal cable or cord that can be no more than 0.8 cm (1/3 inch).^[42] The net is 3 feet 6 inches (1.067 m) high at the posts and 3 feet (0.914 m) high in the center.^[41] The net posts are 3 feet (0.914 m) outside the doubles court on each side or, for a singles net, 3 feet (0.914 m) outside the singles court on each side. There are grass courts, hard courts, clay courts and other surfaces as well.

The modern tennis court owes its design to Major **Walter Clopton Wingfield** who, in 1873, patented a court much the same as the current one for his **stické tennis** (sphairistiké). This template was modified in 1875 to the court design that exists today, with markings similar to Wingfield's version, but with the **hourglass** shape of his court changed to a rectangle.^[43]

3.1.1 Lines

The lines that delineate the width of the court are called the **baseline** (farthest back) and the **service line** (middle of the court). The short mark in the center of each baseline is referred to as either the **hash mark** or the **center mark**. The outermost lines that make up the length are called the **doubles sidelines**. These are the boundaries used when doubles is being played. The lines to the inside of the doubles sidelines are the **singles sidelines** and are used as boundaries in singles play. The area between a doubles sideline and the nearest singles sideline is called the **doubles alley**, which is considered playable in doubles play.

The line that runs across the center of a player's side of the court is called the **service line** because the serve must be delivered into the area between the service line and the net on the receiving side. Despite its name, this is not where a player legally stands when making a serve.^[44]

The line dividing the service line in two is called the **center line** or **center service line**. The boxes this center line creates are called the **service boxes**; depending on a player's position, he or she will have to hit the ball into one of these when serving.^[45] A ball is out only if none of it has hit the line or the area inside the lines upon its first bounce. All the lines are required to be between 1 and 2 inches (51 mm) in width. The baseline can be up to 4 inches (100 mm) wide.^[44]

3.2 Play of a single point

Main article: Point (tennis)

The players (or teams) start on opposite sides of the net. One player is designated the **server**, and the opposing player is the **receiver**. The choice to be server or receiver in the first game and the choice of ends is decided by a toss before the warm-up starts. Service alternates game by game between the two players (or teams.) For each point, the server starts behind the baseline, between the center mark and the sideline. The receiver may start anywhere on their side of the net. When the receiver is ready, the server will **serve**, although the receiver must play to the pace of the server.

In a legal service, the ball travels over the net (without touching it) and into the diagonally opposite service box. If the ball hits the net but lands in the service box, this is a **let** or **net service**, which is void, and the server retakes that serve. The player can serve any number of let services in a point and they are always treated as voids and not as faults. A fault is a serve that falls long or wide of the service box, or does not clear the net. There is also a "foot fault", which occurs when a player's foot touches the baseline or an extension of the center mark before the ball is hit. If the second service is also a fault, the server **double faults**, and the receiver wins the point. However, if the serve is in, it is considered a legal service.

A legal service starts a **rally**, in which the players alternate hitting the ball across the net. A legal return consists of the player or team hitting the ball before it has bounced twice or hit any fixtures except the net, provided that it still falls in the server's court. A player or team cannot hit the ball twice in a row. The ball must travel past the net into the other players' court. A ball that hits the net during a rally is still considered a legal return. The first player or team to fail to make a legal return loses the point. The server then moves to the other side of the service line at the start of a new point.^[46]

3.3 Scoring

Main article: Tennis scoring system

“Break point” redirects here. For software term, see Breakpoint.

3.3.1 Game, Set, Match

Game

A game consists of a sequence of points played with the same player serving. A game is won by the first player to have won at least four points in total and at least two points more than the opponent. The running score of each game is described in a manner peculiar to tennis: scores from zero to three points are described as “*love*”, “*fifteen*”, “*thirty*”, and “*forty*” respectively. If at least three points have been scored by each player, making the player’s scores equal at forty apiece, the score is not called out as “*forty-forty*”, but rather as “*deuce*”. If at least three points have been scored by each side and a player has one more point than his opponent, the score of the game is “*advantage*” for the player in the lead. During informal games, “*advantage*” can also be called “*ad in*” or “*van in*” when the serving player is ahead, and “*ad out*” or “*van out*” when the receiving player is ahead.



The scoreboard of a match between Andy Roddick and Cyril Saulnier.

The score of a tennis game during play is always read with the serving player’s score first. In tournament play, the chair umpire calls the point count (e.g., “*fifteen-love*”) after each point. At the end of a game, the chair umpire also announces the winner of the game and the overall score.

Set

A set consists of a sequence of games played with service alternating between games, ending when the count of games won meets certain criteria. Typically, a player wins a set by winning at least six games and at least two games more than the opponent. If one player has won six games and the opponent five, an additional game is

played. If the leading player wins that game, the player wins the set 7–5. If the trailing player wins the game, a *tie-break* is played. A tie-break, played under a separate set of rules, allows one player to win one more game and thus the set, to give a final set score of 7–6. A “*love*” set means that the loser of the set won zero games, colloquially termed a ‘jam donut’ in the USA.^[47] In tournament play, the chair umpire announces the winner of the set and the overall score. The final score in sets is always read with the winning player’s score first, e.g. “6–2, 4–6, 6–0, 7–5”.

Match

A match consists of a sequence of sets. The outcome is determined through a best of three or five *sets* system. Recreational players may agree to play any number of sets, depending upon time availability or stamina. On the professional circuit, men play best-of-five-set matches at all four Grand Slam tournaments, Davis Cup, and the final of the Olympic Games and best-of-three-set matches at all other tournaments, while women play best-of-three-set matches at all tournaments. The first player to win two sets in a best-of-three, or three sets in a best-of-five, wins the match.^[48] Only in the final sets of matches at the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, the Olympic Games, Davis Cup, and Fed Cup are tie-breaks not played. In these cases, sets are played indefinitely until one player has a two-game lead, leading to some remarkably long matches.

In tournament play, the chair umpire announces the end of the match with the well-known phrase “*Game, set, match*” followed by the winning person’s or team’s name.

3.3.2 Special point terms

Game point

A *game point* occurs in tennis whenever the player who is in the lead in the game needs only one more point to win the game. The terminology is extended to sets (set point), matches (match point), and even championships (championship point). For example, if the player who is serving has a score of 40–love, the player has a triple game point (triple set point, etc.) as the player has three consecutive chances to win the game. Game points, set points, and match points are not part of official scoring and are not announced by the chair umpire in tournament play.

Break point

A *break point* occurs if the receiver, not the server, has a chance to win the game with the next point. Break points are of particular importance because *serving* is generally considered advantageous, with the server being expected to win games in which they are serving. A receiver who has one (score of 30–40), two (score of 15–40) or three (score of love-40) consecutive chances to win the game has *break point*, *double break point* or *triple break point*,

respectively. If the receiver does, in fact, win their break point, the game is awarded to the receiver, and the receiver is said to have *converted* their break point. If the receiver fails to win their break point it is called a *failure to convert*. Winning break points, and thus the game, is also referred to as *breaking serve*, as the receiver has disrupted, or *broken* the natural advantage of the server. If in the following game the previous server also wins a break point it is referred to as *breaking back*. At least one break of serve is required to win a set.

3.4 Rule variations

See also: [Types of tennis match](#)

- **No ad**

From 'No advantage'. Scoring method created by [Jimmy Van Alen](#). The first player or doubles team to win four points wins the game, regardless of whether the player or team is ahead by two points. When the game score reaches three points each, the receiver chooses which side of the court (advantage court or deuce court) the service is to be delivered on the seventh and game-deciding point. Utilized by [World Team Tennis](#) professional competition and ITF Junior Doubles.^{[49][50]}

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- **Pro set**

Instead of playing multiple sets, players may play one "pro set". A pro set is first to 8 (or 10) games by a margin of two games, instead of first to 6 games. A 12-point tie-break is usually played when the score is 8–8 (or 10–10). These are often played with no-ad scoring.

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- **Match tie-break**

This is sometimes played instead of a third set. A match tie-break is played like a regular tie-break, but the winner must win ten points instead of seven. Match tie-breaks are used in the [Hopman Cup](#) and the [2012 Olympic Games](#) for mixed doubles, on the [ATP](#) and [WTA](#) tours for doubles and as a player's choice in [USTA](#) league play.

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Another, however informal, tennis format is called [Canadian doubles](#). This involves three players, with one person playing a doubles team. The single player gets to utilize the alleys normally reserved only for a doubles team. Conversely, the doubles team does not use the alleys when executing a shot. The scoring is the same as a regular game. This format is not sanctioned by any official body.

"[Australian doubles](#)", another informal and unsanctioned form of tennis, is played with similar rules to the [Canadian doubles](#) style, only in this version, players rotate court position after each game. As such, each player plays doubles and singles over the course of a match, with the singles player always serving. Scoring styles vary, but one popular method is to assign a value of 2 points to each game, with the server taking both points if he or she holds serve and the doubles team each taking one if they break serve.

[Wheelchair tennis](#) can be played by able-bodied players as well as people who require a wheelchair for mobility. An extra bounce is permitted. This rule makes it possible to have mixed wheelchair and able-bodied matches. It is possible for a doubles team to consist of a wheelchair player and an able-bodied player (referred to as "one-up, one-down"), or for a wheelchair player to play against an able-bodied player. In such cases, the extra bounce is permitted for the wheelchair users only.

4 Surface

Main article: [Tennis court § Types of tennis courts](#)

There are five types of court surface used in professional play. Each surface is different in the speed and height of the bounce of the ball. The same surface plays faster indoors than outdoors.

- **Clay**

Examples are red clay, used at the [French Open](#), and green clay (an example of which is Har-Tru and used mainly in the U.S.). Almost all red clay courts are made not of natural clay but of crushed brick that is packed to make the court. The crushed brick is then covered with a topping of other crushed particles. This type of surface does not absorb water easily and is the most common in Europe and Latin America. Clay courts normally have a slower paced ball and a fairly true bounce with more spin.

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- **Hard**