

TABLE TENNIS RULES

The rules for the Olympic Sport of Table Tennis are standardized worldwide, as follow:

STARTING A GAME:

At the start of a game, players flip a coin (or hide the ball in their hand under the table with opponent choosing a hand). The player who wins choice may choose to serve first, or receive first, or which side to start on.

SCORING:

Games are 21 point. A player must win by 2 points, so sometimes the game continues past 21 points until someone gets a 2-point lead. Matches are usually best 2 out of 3. Players switch sides as soon as one player scores 10 points.

POINTS:

A point is scored whenever a player fails to make a legal return. A legal return means the ball is returned over the net and hits the opponent's side of the table. The ball may not touch anything a player wears or carries other than the racket.

SERVING RULES:

The main points of the service rules are as follows:

- Ball must be in the flat palm of the hand, fingers together, thumb free.
- Ball must be tossed at least six inches high from hand (same height as net, for reference), and nearly vertical upward.
- Ball must be contacted on the drop.
- Ball must hit first the server's side of the table, then the receiver's side of the table.
- Throughout serve, both ball and racket must be above the table surface, and behind the endline or its imaginary extension.
- No spin may be imparted to the ball from the hand.
- A serve begins as soon as the ball leaves the hand. If the server misses the ball entirely on the serve, it is a lost point.

ORDER OF SERVICE:

Throughout a game, players alternate serving five times in a row. The major exception is after deuce (20-20), when players alternate serves until someone wins by 2 points.

DOUBLES RULES:

The rules for doubles are the same as for singles, with these exceptions:

- Players on each team alternate shots.
- Players always serve from the right-hand court to the opponent's right-hand court, i.e. crosscourt.

ORDER OF PLAY:

The order of who hits to who is set in the first game. If players A & B are playing Y & Z, and if A starts out by serving to Y, then the order is as follows. In the first game, A serves & hits to Y; Y to B; B to Z; and Z to A. In each successive game, the order switches. In the last possible game of a match, the order of play changes as soon as one team has scored 10 points, with the receiver changing.