

Court Usage and Etiquette Guidelines



ETIQUETTE”the unofficial rules of play”

Of all sports, tennis is famous for its etiquette. Good tennis etiquette makes the sport more enjoyable – for both players and spectators alike. For sure, good tennis etiquette won't give you a bigger serve or a more accurate backhand but it will make you more aware and more fun to share a court with. In no particular order then, here we go;

1. WHO IS ENTITLED TO PLAY?

Only members of SPLTC who have paid the appropriate subscription (i.e. Adult, Junior, Associate etc.) for the current year are eligible to use the courts. However, a non-member can make a maximum of 6 visits per year at a cost of £5 per session. If a visitor wishes to play beyond the 6 visits then they will need to join the club and pay the appropriate fee.

2. COURT USAGE

Courts are for all members to book unless they are in use for inter-club team matches, for Saturday morning Junior play, or for Monday afternoon or evening club coaching.

Each week, club play takes place every Tuesday morning and evening, Wednesday morning and evening, Thursday evening, Friday morning and Sunday morning. Mornings sessions are 10am and 12pm and evenings sessions are 6pm and 9pm.

Additionally, during the summer months of June and July, Wednesday evening club play is suspended to allow club tournament matches to take place between 6pm and 9pm.

All courts must be booked by the club's Fast Court website.

3. CLOTHING, FOOTWEAR AND CLUB TAGS

With the new artificial grass court surface, it's important to wear a pair of Tennis Shoes or failing that, suitable non-marking sports trainers. All members should display their plastic "club shoe-tag" that is very easily threaded on to the laces. This visibly shows current membership of the club and of course an entitlement to play. All players are expected to wear clothing suitable for tennis on court.

4. GETTING ON AND OFF THE COURTS

When entering the courts wait for a suitable moment - usually it is best to wait for the end of a game.

The same applies when leaving. If your match has just finished and other games are in play, wait until a suitable break occurs before exiting. In both cases, be sure to close the gate behind you.

5. NEW MEMBERS.....AND OLDER JUNIORS ATTENDING CLUB NIGHTS

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We've all been there.....remember it can be a bit daunting coming down as a new member to a Tennis Club to join in your first club evening. It seems obvious, but it is important that all newcomers are made to feel most welcome and part of the evening's play. Introductions go a long way at SPLTC.

To help with mixing-in, Committee members may suggest pairings for evening play and ensure everyone gets a game. If you have the experience and someone asks for a bit of help with their shots or positioning, give them a hand or some guidance. It is no substitute for formal coaching but it's good form and a nice thing to do. If older Junior's join in, be particularly supportive towards them – remember in a few years they may be helping you!

Have some consideration of the standard of your opposition, especially when it comes to serving. There is no harm in doing some second serve practice.

6. STARTING OFF.....

To determine who will serve first, spin your racket on its head, let it fall to the floor, and ask your opponent to call rough or smooth (or similar versions of the same). Look to see whether the tied-off strings on your racket are facing up or down, if they are up then that's rough and if they are down that's smooth. The winner can choose whether to serve first, OR to receive first, OR can choose which end of the court they wish to start playing on.

7. WARM UPS

Always warm up with your opponent or partner before playing. However, this is not the time to practice competitively. Don't hit at full pace - try to place your shots so returns can be made without having to fly around the court. A good warm up appreciably minimises the risks of injury or strain.

When receiving warm up serves, it's normal practice to stop the ball and then go through your own serve warm up.

8. BALL MANAGEMENT – THIS ONE'S IMPORTANT!

If you are the server you'll need 2 balls immediately to hand for each point....just in case you miss the 1st serve.

Think tidy ball habits! Any balls on your side of the court are your responsibility, and if you are receiving it is your job to make sure they are returned to the server during a game.

If a ball heads off to an adjacent court during play, don't rush after it. Wait till a suitable break in your own match and crucially, wait until whoever is playing on the next court has finished their point when they will return it to you.

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If you notice a ball laying behind a player that could cause a fall – typically before a point starts - let them know so they can move it away for their own safety. Most players raise their racquet to gain a player's attention in such cases.

9. KEEPING SCORE

The server should always announce the set score before the start of each game and the game score before each point. State the score loudly and clearly. Announcing the score also lets the receiver know that you are ready to begin the next point.

10. LINE CALLS OR CLOSE CALLS.....

If you cannot clearly tell whether your opponent's shot is in or out, **it is in**, and it is their point.

You must be 100 percent sure you're making the correct call, so the benefit of the doubt goes to your opponent if there's any uncertainty. Call the shot out in a clear voice if you know that it's out.

You should not make calls on your own shots that land on the other side of the court. You have to respect your opponent's decision and trust their honesty and fair play.

In doubles, you should not call balls wide if you are on the far side-line and your partner is closer to the ball. Most likely, your partner has a better angle to make the decision. Similarly, if you are receiving a serve and your partner is standing near the service line, let them make the call on a serve.

11. BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDE - DO THE RIGHT THING

Even if you are playing badly, refrain from shouting or looking dejected both in social and competitive play. Undoubtedly, your attitude effects how you play, so try to have fun and stay positive. Additionally, it is disrespectful to your opponent to look miserable after every point. Give them credit if they are beating you and keep your head up.

If your opponent hits a great shot, it's worth recognising it. On the other hand, apologise if you win a lucky point or if you accidentally hit your opponent with a ball.

At the end of a match, shake hands firmly or touch racquets (Under covid regulations only touch racquets) and congratulate your opponent(s). Nobody wants to grasp a limp, clammy dead fish in celebration of a big victory.

12. LANGUAGE

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We all come here to enjoy our tennis and have fun. **Bad language and swearing has no place on the court whatever the circumstances;** this is imperative to the enjoyment of all.

13. OFF-COURT SPECTATORS

Particularly during competitive matches and to avoid distracting players, please try not to walk or move around behind a court during active play. If you need to go by, simply pass as quickly as possible after a point has finished. Also, when entering through the gate into the club, please wait until a point is finished, once again so as not to distract the players.