

Doubles Tennis Rules

'The Spirit of Teamwork - Communicate to Dominate'

Doubles tennis. Simply termed and insinuates the obvious. In this type of tennis competition there are a total of four tennis players involved. In other words, doubles is two vs. two competition.

Two tennis players combine forces to compete as a team challenging another team of two on opposite ends of the tennis court.

Singles vs. Doubles

Which is more challenging, singles or doubles? This is argumentative and at times an endless debate due to the various opinions and obvious factors.

In my opinion, competition is competition in the sport of tennis, but there is an obvious clear-cut difference in the dynamics of the game when competitors compete in doubles tennis.

Since there are two tennis players on a team in doubles (compared to one tennis player on a team in singles) an individual tennis player has less court to cover making it less demanding, but not necessarily less challenging than singles.

The primary objectives in singles and doubles tennis competition are constant. Win ...

- points to win games
- games to win sets
- sets to win matches
- every match and ultimately the championship in a tennis tournament

Most of the [singles tennis rules and guidelines](#) are applicable in doubles tennis, but there are a few exceptions. First and foremost, the court size is wider. The boundaries are extended from side to side to the doubles sidelines.

This includes the alleys between the singles and doubles sidelines on the court. Keep in mind though that the doubles tennis court boundaries are only in play after the ball is served.

Doubles Tennis Serving Rotation

Serves rotate from team to team, but instead of a two player rotation (singles) a four player rotation (doubles) is noted and maintained throughout a set.

For instance, let's say competitors A and B (Team 1) are playing a set against competitors X and Y (Team 2). Player B is serving first on Team 1 and Player X is serving first on Team 2. It has been determined that Team 2 is serving the first game in the set.

- Game 1 - Player X serves
- Game 2 - Player B serves
- Game 3 - Player Y serves
- Game 4 - Player A serves

The serve continues to rotate - X, then B, then Y, then A, then X, then B ... for the entire set. Simply put, each player rotates to serve every fourth game until the set is finalized.

In the set(s) that follow, teams can decide which player will serve first for their respective team and establish a new rotation. Strategic game play comes into play, but my advice is to let the best server on your team serve first.

There is a slight addition to serving options in doubles in relation to singles. The server gains the area behind the alley, along baseline between the singles and doubles sidelines.

In other words, the server in doubles tennis can choose to serve from anywhere behind and along the baseline from the center mark to the doubles sideline on the team's end of the court.

Opt To Receive: Deuce Court or Advantage Court

Prior to game play, teammates must opt to receive serves in the right service court (deuce court) or left service court (advantage court). Once this is decided, each player on that team can only return serves from his or her designated service court for that set.

Switching service courts to receive serves is not an option until the set is over. At that point, teammates can switch service court sides to start a new set and at the beginning of each new set.

Teammates can stand anywhere on the teams end on the court providing that the player expected to return the serve actually attempts or executes the return and not the other player. Typically, the receiver positions behind the baseline to receive serves and the teammate positions in or along the adjacent service court.

Don't Speculate, Communicate

Communication is essential in doubles tennis. As the tennis ball travels from one end of the court to the other end of the court, only one competitor on that team can strike, smash, slice, lob, volley ... the ball each time it is returned over the net.

For instance, if you and your teammate attempt to return the same ball and both of your racquets touch the ball, the point is awarded to the other team. However, if only one of the racquets touches the ball, game play continues until a team wins that point.

The game is doubles, but that does not imply that competitors must take turns striking the ball. In fact, after the serve a competitor for a team may decide to cover the entire court and execute every return in an effort to win a point.

With the exception of returning serves, that is well within the rules and guidelines in regards to doubles tennis. Every now and then that may be necessary, but if this competitor habitually covers the entire court - expect an aggravated response from his or her teammate.

The Doubles Tennis Tie-Breaker

Basically, singles [tie-breaker scoring](#) and guidelines are maintained in the doubles tie-breaker, but there is an exception. Similar to singles, the two-point rotation starts after the initial point is played out and the serving rotation is maintain.

The difference is that instead of two, there are four players participating in the two-point serving rotation. For example, let's say competitors A and B (Team 1) are playing a tiebreaker against competitors X and Y (Team 2). The serving rotation is maintained above and Player X next in line to serve.

- Point 1 - Player X Serves
- Point 2 - Player A Serves
- Point 3 - Player A Serves

- Point 4 - Player Y Serves
- Point 5 - Player Y Serves
- Point 6 - Player B Serves
- Point 7 - Player B Serves
- Point 8 - Player X Serves
- Point 9 - Player X Serves

This rotation continues until a team wins the tie-breaker. To win the tie-breaker and finalize the set, a team must score a minimum seven points combined with a two point advantage. Possible tie-breaker scoring results for the winning team could be 7-1, 7-5, 8-6, 14-12, 21-19, etc.

Alternative Doubles Competition

Mixed Doubles - The term 'Mixed' is referring to gender. The rules and guidelines remain in tact as stated, but there is a condition. One male and one female are the conditional members on each team.

Canadian Doubles - This alternative of doubles requires three players. This is two-on-one competition. In other words, this is doubles vs. singles. One side of the court has two players and the other side of the court has one player.

The doubles players' boundaries is the singles court and the singles player's boundaries is the doubles court. Three sets are played and each player must play singles in at least one set. This is tennis with a twist, but the typical tennis rules and guidelines are enforced.

The championship is determined by the singles player who wins the majority of combined games played in the match.

Australian Doubles - Similar to Canadian Doubles, but there are couple of differences. Australian Doubles is still doubles vs. singles, however the singles player always serves and players rotate positions on the court after every game giving all players an opportunity to play singles every third game.

The scoring rules are not etched in stone. Since this is considered an unsanctioned style of tennis, scoring can be determine prior to game play by tournament officials, coaches in practice, and at times the players participating in a pick up game.

Typically, many adopt the Canadian Doubles guidelines (most combined games won by a singles player) to determine a winner.

Another common method is to determine a specific point value for each game. For instance, lets say a game is worth 4 points. If the singles player wins, he or she gains 4 points for that game. If the doubles players win, each player on that team split points, gaining 2 points a piece.

Tennis is considered **the 'sport for a lifetime'**. This is brilliantly stated and credited to the United States Tennis Association in a captivating slogan aim at promoting tennis as a lifelong recreational and competitive sport.

Spectators admire its electrifying nature while tennis athletes relish in the competition. Yes, the fast-paced energetic action in double tennis competition compliments the sports dynamics as it is stimulating watch and no doubt a blast to play.