



Guidance for Tennis Players in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

Version 5 – Published 21 July 2020



TENNIS
FOR BRITAIN

COVID-19 SECURE 'PLAY SAFE' GUIDELINES - RETURN TO PLAY

These COVID-19 guidelines apply to England only. They have been produced in line with Government announcements on the easing of lockdown restrictions, and the subsequent Government guidance on [gatherings, public spaces, and outdoor activities](#), the [phased return of outdoor sport and recreation](#) and for [providers of out of school settings](#) published on the Gov.uk website.

These guidelines are for non-professional players. Separate guidelines are in place for elite tennis, which is subject to specific and additional protocols.

Guidelines for playing tennis in Scotland can be read [here](#) and guidelines for Wales can be read [here](#).

INTRODUCTION

We know how important it is for people to be active, and the particular role tennis can have in the physical and mental wellbeing of those that play it. By its very nature, tennis is an activity whereby close person to person contact can be avoided, with the Government saying tennis is a good example of an activity that can be undertaken in a way compliant with social distancing restrictions.

Based on our continued discussions with Government and following the further easing of restrictions, the LTA has developed this updated set of practical guidelines to follow so that tennis can be played in England, where the local environment allows.

We have indicated the key additions and updates to these guidelines for Version 3 of this document with **[NEW]** and **[UPDATED]** on the following pages.

These guidelines apply to both tennis and padel, and outline adaptations and considerations so that tennis activity can be enjoyed in a way that is in line with Government advice and helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They include measures to maintain hygiene and minimise unnecessary interactions with others.

[NEW] As lockdown restrictions are eased, the LTA's guidance, in line with Government legislation and guidance, will shift in focus to ensuring that venues and coaches can provide COVID-19 secure environments, recognising the different operating contexts that organisations face.

[UPDATED] Please be aware that not all courts or associated facilities may be open, or may have their own specific restrictions in place. As venues will need to make an assessment based on their own individual circumstances as to what they feel they can open safely at their venue. Where they choose to remain closed please respect this decision.

Should you have any questions, [please refer to the FAQs on the LTA website](#).

We hope you enjoy getting back on court!

IMPORTANT: Where a local lockdown is in place alternative measures and guidelines may be in place – players in these areas are advised to check our main coronavirus information page at www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus before playing.

SECTION 1: BEFORE & AFTER PLAY

STAY UP TO DATE

- Government information around social distancing is available [here](#) and should be read in full
- Be aware guidance can change and restrictions may be reintroduced - ensure you have checked the latest version of the LTA's guidelines for tennis players on the LTA website

WHO CAN PLAY

- Before leaving home to play tennis, all participants should undergo a self-assessment symptom check for any COVID-19 symptoms [using the information on the NHS website](#)
- If you are symptomatic or living in a household with someone else who has a possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection you should remain at home and not go out to play tennis, following [NHS and PHE guidance on self-isolation](#)
- **[UPDATED]** If you are required to self-isolate for any other reason then you should also not exercise outside your own home or garden and should not exercise with others. This includes if you have been asked to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because you are a close contact of a known COVID-19 case, or if you have returned from a [travel destination not included on the Government's travel corridor list](#). In all of these instances, you should not leave your home to play tennis
- If you are in [a clinically vulnerable group](#) (e.g. over 70) you can play tennis but should be especially careful and diligent about social distancing and hand hygiene
- **[UPDATED]** If you are classified as [clinically extremely vulnerable](#), from 6 July you can consider playing tennis, always maintaining social distancing and with robust hand and respiratory hygiene. Further guidance is [available here](#), which will be updated further from 1 August as the Government pauses shielding

BEFORE LEAVING HOME & AFTER YOU RETURN

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before leaving home to go to the court (use an alcohol gel if washing hands is not possible)
- Arrive at the venue changed and ready to play, and shower at home – even when the changing facilities are opened use of these should be avoided where possible
- If you have special needs, you may wish to speak to the venue in advance to ensure your needs are accommodated and appropriate facilities are open

COURT BOOKINGS

- Where the facility allows, ensure you have booked a court in advance and make payment online
- **[UPDATED]** Play should only take place on outdoor courts until 25 July, when indoor courts and bubble courts will be able to open, subject to specific guidelines.
- The LTA's online booking platform has courts that can be booked in over 300 parks and clubs nationwide - the site www.lta.org.uk/rally

- Please note that to support NHS Test and Trace, venues and coaches may need to take additional details from you when booking so that they have appropriate temporary records in place to assist this service

EQUIPMENT

- Take hand sanitizer with you
- Use your own equipment where possible. Equipment such as rackets can be shared, but where this happens ensure thorough cleaning before and after use. Players should not share items such as towels.
- Only take the minimum amount of equipment with you that you need to play
- Clean and wipe down your equipment, including racquets and water bottles before and after use
- Bring a full water bottle, and do not share food or drink with others
- Ensure you take all your belongings with you at the end of the session and do not leave anything on court

TRAVELLING TO AND FROM THE COURT

- **[UPDATED]** From 17 July, the Government has updated its guidance on travel. You can help control COVID-19 and travel safely by walking and cycling, if you can. Where this is not possible, use public transport or drive - [safer travel guidance is provided on the Government website](#)
- Arrive as close as possible to when you need to be there
- Use alcohol gel after touching any court gates, fences, benches, etc, and avoid doing so where possible
- Allow others to leave before you enter the court - if you need to wait then do so away from the courts and clear of the gates
- Ensure you leave the court before the end of your allotted time so that it is empty for the next players
- Avoid congregating on or around the court after playing to allow access for others

USING VENUE FACILITIES

- Be aware that onsite toilet facilities may not be open. Where they are open, players are advised to take particular care when using them and clean hands thoroughly after use
- Avoid using changing rooms where possible
- If takeaway catering facilities are open at the venue, respect social distancing whilst queuing for food and drink.
- For indoor bars and restaurants, be aware that the Government guidelines for meeting people indoors differs from that for outdoors, and is limited meeting people from no more than one other household (while maintaining social distancing at all times)

SECTION 2: DURING PLAY

TENNIS ACTIVITY

- **[UPDATED]** Both singles play and doubles play is permitted with people from outside of your household, as long as you remain 2 metres apart as far as possible – meaning that four people from different households can play doubles. This is the case on both outdoor and indoor courts.
- For padel, doubles play is also permitted but extra care is advised and it should only be done so where players are confident they can maintain 2 metres apart
- **[UPDATED]** Coached sessions for children should be limited to groups of no more than 15 children (plus coach(es), and can take place on outdoor or indoor (from 25 July) courts, in line with guidance from the Department of Education on out of school settings.
- **[NEW]** Coached sessions for adults may now take place in larger groups provided that venues and coaches follow COVID-19 secure guidance, on outdoor or indoor (from 25 July) courts. This is in line with Government [guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity events](#) and for [providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities](#).
- **[UPDATED]** Club nights and social play activity are now possible for venues that are COVID-19 secure, in line with guidance from Government on large sport and physical activity outdoor participation events.
- **[NEW]** The LTA recommends no more than 12 players on one full-size tennis court and surrounding areas at any one time, in order to ensure social distancing can be maintained at all times. Most tennis sessions will have far less than this number per court, but a scenario where this may apply is red stage tennis for children.
- Players are advised to limit their interactions with anyone outside of the group they are attending the venue with (e.g. players on another court or in a different coaching group)
- Players should continue to maintain social distancing from those that they do not live with or are in a support bubble with

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

Other than where players are from the same household or part of a support bubble, follow [Government advice on staying alert and safe](#), and:

- Stay at least two metres away from other players (including during play as far as possible, when taking breaks and before and after play)
- Do not make physical contact with other players (such as shaking hands or high five)
- Avoid chasing the ball down to another court if other players are using it
- For doubles, consider agreeing in advance which player will take the shot if a ball travels to the centre of the court
- For coached sessions, pay careful attention to the instructions of the coach
- Where you cannot maintain a two metre distance then further precautions should be put in place as part of 'one metre plus mitigations' guidance (see the Government's advice on ['Staying safe outside your home'](#) for more details)

HYGIENE

- Hand hygiene is imperative - hand sanitise at intervals if you have to touch communal surfaces
- If you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve
- Avoid touching your face

EQUIPMENT & FACILITIES

- If players wish to, they can choose to use their own marked tennis balls
- If you choose to use shared balls then extra care must be taken to ensure you do not touch your face during play, and you should clean your hands before play and immediately after finishing (use alcohol gel if required)
- Players should still avoid using their hands to pick up tennis balls from other courts where possible - use your racquet/foot to return them as those players may have decided to use their own marked tennis balls
- Avoid using other equipment such as courtside benches, net handles or court sweepers where possible
- When playing padel, try to avoid touching the court walls

SUPERVISION & SPECTATING

- Where attendance of a parent/guardian (non-participant) is required, or a carer for a disabled player, it is permitted and is not counted as part of the maximum group size, but should be off court and limited to one per player where possible
- Supporters, parents, and other spectators should remain socially distanced whilst attending events. Spectator groups must be restricted to discrete six person gathering limits and spread out, in line with wider government guidance

COMPETITIONS

- Some formats of competition will be able to resume before others, and [LTA Local Tennis Leagues](#), LTA Youth Box Leagues and internal singles and doubles box leagues/ladders can be played as long as they adhere to the guidelines in place
- All LTA staged and LTA approved competitions (grade 1 to 5) up to at least Monday 31 August 2020 have been cancelled
- LTA approved competitions (Grade 6) such as Matchplays and County & District Leagues can now take place outdoors, in line with the Government's [guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity participation events](#).
- Friendly matches between Clubs/Counties, Team Challenge, Quorn Family Tennis Cup and Internal Club Competition can also now restart outdoors in line with the Government's guidance.