

Referees, Umpires, Officials s8

As a tournament player, you need to know what these terms mean. The terms "referee", "umpire", "official" and even "tournament director" are used by many players interchangeably.

They don't mean the same thing, and if you don't know the difference, you may lose points, games, or even a match because of it.

"Official" is a general term which includes anyone who exercises some degree of control over the conduct of tournament play. Typically, this term applies to the "referee", "deputy referees", "site referees", "roving umpires", "chair umpires", and "line umpires". [The "tournament director" is not really an official, but sometimes the duties of this position and those of the "referee" are confused.]

Umpires (roving or chair) typically wear the USTA "officials shirt" and/or other distinguishing apparel. Roving umpires are responsible to monitor play on two or more courts and become involved in matches only when invited. (This invitation may come from a player, or take the form of on-court profanity, racquet abuse, etc.) Umpires may come to the court to address a certain issue and leave, or stay for a few games, or stay for the duration of the match, depending on the nature of the situation.

Umpires' are on or around the courts and typically:

- conduct pre-match meetings with players, perform the coin-toss, and time the warm-up
- oversee play and issue code and time violations, when warranted
- resolve disputes regarding tennis law (rules)
- resolve scoring disputes
- make decisions of fact (correcting erroneous "out" calls, net touches, incorrect score calling, etc.) when on court or in direct observation thereof
- summon the referee to the court at the players' request for a decision on a point of law.

The **referee** (or site referee) should wear USTA "officials' apparel". The referee may be at the tournament desk or anywhere on the premises, but can always be located by radio. The **referee**:

- oversees all tournament play and has the final responsibility for assuring fairness, enforcement of the rules, and scheduling matches
- suspends play and postpones or cancels matches when circumstances warrant
- makes final decisions regarding tennis law. The decision on a point of law of an **"umpire"** may be appealed to the **referee**.

What happens when there is a dispute?

If something occurs on the court that you feel is contrary to the rules, your first line of appeal is the **"umpire"**. If the umpire must be summoned, and the question involves the score, stop playing until he arrives. When the umpire arrives, you and your opponent should explain the situation. The umpire will apply the rules to the current situation and give instructions as to how to proceed.

What happens if the dispute is over line calls, on issue of fact?

First, the umpire cannot overturn any call that he didn't see. No matter how adamantly a player protests his opponent's call, **the umpire cannot overturn the call, or order the point replayed**. If the umpire is already on the court, or is in direct observation of the incident, he may "correct" a clearly erroneous call. If he issues an overrule (correction), the player making the erroneous call loses the point. [The exception to this rule is when an umpire can read a ball mark on a clay court that both players agree is the mark.]

What happens if you don't agree with the umpire's interpretation of the rules?

Any decision made by the umpire regarding the rules (not fact, like a ball being in or out, or ball hitting a player) may be appealed to the referee. Players should use words similar to these, "I am not sure that I agree with that decision. Please summon the referee." The umpire is obligated to call the referee. If the ruling doesn't affect the score, play may resume.

What happens if the umpire's decision affects the score?

Do not resume play until the referee has come to the court and rendered his decision. Once the referee has issued his opinion, you must resume play immediately.

What happens if you resume play and then decide to appeal to the referee at a later time?

When any dispute occurs that affects the score and it is resolved by an **umpire** and play is resumed, the score **"IS"** whatever was agreed upon when play resumed. If you don't agree with the score, **do not resume play** until you appeal to the **referee**.

What if I don't agree with the referee either?

Sorry, you are out of options; the referee had the final say. You have 20 seconds to resume play.

If you get in a situation that you don't believe is fair or follows the rules, remember these words,
"Please summon the referee."