

USTA/Midwest Section Junior Tournament Basics

An important stage of player development is for players to advance through a series of tournaments at different levels of competitive tennis. The following are those levels:

- **District level** - This level is for local competition and players, but events are normally open to players from other districts.
- **State level** - Encompasses each individual state in the USTA/Midwest Section. These events include players from each district within each state and, in some cases, players from outside the state.
- **Sectional level** - This level includes the following states in the USTA/Midwest Section: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin, as well as parts of Kentucky and West Virginia. These events include players from each District within the Section and may be open to players from outside the section.
- **National level** - Encompasses the United States. These events include players in 12-18 age divisions from each section within the United States. USTA National Championships have restrictions on the participation of players who are not U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens.

What is a sanctioned tournament? A sanctioned tournament is one that is approved by the USTA. The club, organization, or person running the tournament has paid a sanction fee to the USTA and agrees to run the tournament following USTA Tournament rules and regulations.

How do we find out where and when junior tournaments are held? Complete tournament schedules are available on the USTA/Midwest Section website (www.midwest.usta.com).

How do I determine what age division my son or daughter may participate in? A junior may compete in an age division up to the first day of the month in they were born. For example, if a junior player will turn 11 on December 10th, the junior may play in 10 & under tournaments until December 1. Juniors may play “up” in any older age divisions; however, they may not play in a younger age division once they have “aged out”.

How do I enter my child in a tournament? All players must sign-up via the TennisLink Registration System (www.midwest.usta.com). Be sure to have your USTA Membership number and your credit card ready when you register. For specific instructions, please refer to Section 8 of Guidebook.

I understand there are some USTA/Midwest Section tournaments that are “open” and some that are “closed.” What is meant by “open” and “closed” tournaments? An “open” tournament is one that is open for any USTA member that meets the age and gender requirements for that tournament. Entries to “closed” tournaments are restricted, normally by a requirement of residency within a specified geographic area. Some tournaments also require that a player be endorsed for participation by the player’s District or Section.

How many matches will my child play in a tournament? It depends in part on how many players are entered in the tournament, how well your child plays, and type of consolation draw. The following are a few examples of consolation draw types:

- **Compass Draw:** Term refers to a tournament format in which players are guaranteed to play four or more matches even if they lose all their matches.
- **Feed-In Consolation (FIC):** Term refers to a special form of consolation draw in which the losers from the main draw are fed back into another draw against players who lost in earlier rounds of the tournament.

- **First Match Consolation (FMC):** This is a consolation draw in which only the losers in the first round or match are entered into the consolation draw.

How do I find out the start-time of my child's first match? Players can obtain start times through the TennisLink Internet Registration System. This information can be found on the tournament web-page.

Should my child bring anything special to a tennis tournament? In addition to tennis rackets, your child should bring his or her USTA card, a water bottle, sunscreen, a towel, and extra t-shirts/tops. If you think your child will be playing more than one match in a day, you might want to bring some fruit, food, and a sports drink. (Note: Some tournaments require players to adhere to a certain dress code. Please check with the tournament director for any requirements)

Rules and Regulations

As you and your player enter the competitive world of junior tennis, it is highly recommended that you understand the basic rules of tennis. The USTA Friend at Court is a publication that is produced every year with the rules and regulations for all tournament play. This is the "official" rule book that tournament directors and officials use. You can view the USTA Friend at Court by going to www.usta.com.

The following is the "*The Code-The Players Guide for Matches when Officials are not Present*" in the USTA Friend at Court.

PRINCIPLES

1. *Courtesy.* Tennis is a game that requires cooperation and courtesy from all participants. Make tennis a fun game by praising your opponents' good shots and by not:

- conducting loud postmortems after points;
- complaining about shots like lobs and drop shots;
- embarrassing a weak opponent by being overly gracious or condescending;
- losing your temper, using vile language, throwing your racket, or slamming a ball in anger; or
- sulking when you are losing.

2. *Counting points played in good faith.* All points played in good faith stand. For example, if after losing a point, a player discovers that the net was four inches too high, the point stands. If a point is played from the wrong court, there is no replay. If during a point, a player realizes that a mistake was made at the beginning (for example, service from the wrong court), the player shall continue playing the point. Corrective action may be taken only after a point has been completed. Shaking hands at end of the match is an acknowledgment by the players that the match is over.

THE WARM-UP

3. *Warm-up is not practice.* A player should provide the opponent a 5-minute warm-up (ten minutes if there are no ballpersons). If a player refuses to warm up the opponent, the player forfeits the right to a warm-up. Some players confuse warm-up and practice. Each player should make a special effort to hit shots directly to the opponent. (If partners want to warm each other up while their opponents are warming up, they may do so.)

4. *Warm-up serves and returns.* A player should take all warm-up serves before the first serve of the match. A player who returns serves should return them at a moderate pace in a manner that does not disrupt the server.

MAKING CALLS

5. *Player makes calls on own side of the net.* A player calls all shots landing on, or aimed at, the player's side of the net.

6. *Opponent gets benefit of doubt.* When a match is played without officials, the players are responsible for making decisions, particularly for line calls. There is a subtle difference between

player decisions and those of an on-court official. An official impartially resolves a problem involving a call, whereas a player is guided by the unwritten law that any doubt must be resolved in favor of the opponent. A player in attempting to be scrupulously honest on line calls frequently will find himself keeping a ball in play that might have been out or that the player discovers too late was out. *Even so, the game is much better played this way.*

7. *Ball touching any part of line is good.* If any part of the ball touches the line, the ball is good. A ball 99% out is still 100% good.

8. *Ball that cannot be called out is good.* Any ball that cannot be called out is considered to have been good. A player may not claim a let on the basis of not seeing a ball. One of tennis' most infuriating moments occurs after a long hard rally when a player makes a clean placement and the opponent says: "I'm not sure if it was good or out. Let's play a let." Remember, it is each player's responsibility to call all balls landing on, or aimed at, the player's side of the net. If a ball can't be called out with certainty, it is good. When you say your opponent's shot was really out but you offer to replay the point to give your opponent a break, you are deluding yourself because you must have had some doubt.

9. *Calls when looking across a line or when far away.* The call of a player looking down a line is much more likely to be accurate than that of a player looking across a line. When you are looking across a line, don't call a ball out unless you can clearly see part of the court between where the ball hit and the line. It is difficult for a player who stands on one baseline to question a call on a ball that landed near the other baseline.

10. *Treat all points the same regardless of their importance.* All points in a match should be treated the same. There is no justification for considering a match point differently than the first point.

11. *Requesting opponent's help.* When an opponent's opinion is requested and the opponent gives a positive opinion, it must be accepted. If neither player has an opinion, the ball is considered good. Aid from an opponent is available only on a call that ends a point.

12. *Out calls corrected.* If a player mistakenly calls a ball "out" and then realizes it was good, the point shall be replayed if the player returned the ball within the proper court. Nonetheless, if the player's return of the ball results in a "weak sitter," the player should give the opponent the point. If the player failed to make the return, the opponent wins the point. If the mistake was made on the second serve, the server is entitled to two serves.

13. *Player calls own shots out.* With the exception of the first serve, a player should call against himself or herself any ball the player clearly sees out regardless of whether requested to do so by the opponent. The prime objective in making calls is accuracy. All players should cooperate to attain this objective.

14. *Partners' disagreement on calls.* If one partner calls the ball out and the other partner sees the ball good, they shall call it good. It is more important to give your opponents the benefit of the doubt than to avoid possibly hurting your partner's feelings. The tactful way to achieve the desired result is to tell your partner quietly of the mistake and then let your partner concede the point. If a call is changed from out to good, the principles of Code 12 apply.

15. *Audible or visible calls.* No matter how obvious it is to a player that the opponent's ball is out, the opponent is entitled to a prompt audible or visible out call.

16. *Opponent's calls questioned.* When a player genuinely doubts an opponent's call, the player may ask: "Are you sure of your call?" If the opponent reaffirms that the ball was out, the call shall be accepted. If the opponent acknowledges uncertainty, the opponent loses the point. There shall be no further delay or discussion.

17. *Spectators never to make calls.* A player shall not enlist the aid of a spectator in making a call. No spectator has a part in the match.

18. *Prompt calls eliminate two chance option.* A player shall make all calls promptly after the ball has hit the court. A call shall be made either before the player's return shot has gone out of play or before the opponent has had the opportunity to play the return shot. Prompt calls will quickly eliminate the "two chances to win the point" option that some players practice. To illustrate, a

player is advancing to the net for an easy put away and sees a ball from an adjoining court rolling toward the court. The player continues to advance and hits the shot, only to have the supposed easy put away fly over the baseline. The player then claims a let. The claim is not valid because the player forfeited the right to call a let by choosing instead to play the ball. The player took a chance to win or lose and is not entitled to a second chance.

19. *Lets called when balls roll on the court.* When a ball from an adjacent court enters the playing area, any player shall call a let as soon as the player becomes aware of the ball. The player loses the right to call a let if the player unreasonably delays in making the call.

20. *Touches, hitting ball before it crosses net, invasion of opponent's court, double hits, and double bounces.* A player shall promptly acknowledge if:

- a ball touches the player;
- the player touches the net;
- the player touches the player's opponent's court;
- the player hits a ball before it crosses the net;
- the player deliberately carries or double hits the ball; or
- the ball bounces more than once in the player's court.

21. *Balls hit through the net or into the ground.* A player shall make the ruling on a ball that the player's opponent hits:

- through the net; or
- into the ground before it goes over the net.

22. *Calling balls on clay courts.* If any part of the ball mark touches the line on a clay court, the ball shall be called good. If you can see only part of the mark on the court, this means that the missing part is on the line or tape. A player should take a careful second look at any point-ending placement that is close to a line on a clay court. Occasionally a ball will strike the tape, jump, and then leave a full mark behind the line. This does not mean that a player is required to show the opponent the mark. The opponent shall not cross the net to inspect a mark. See **USTA Regulation IV.C.8**. If the player hears the sound of the ball striking the tape and sees a clean spot on the tape near the mark, the player should give the point to the opponent.

SERVING

23. *Server's request for third ball.* When a server requests three balls, the receiver shall comply when the third ball is readily available. Distant balls shall be retrieved at the end of a game.

24. *Foot Faults.* A player may warn an opponent that the opponent has committed a flagrant foot fault. If the foot faulting continues, the player may attempt to locate an official. If no official is available, the player may call flagrant foot faults. Compliance with the foot fault rule is very much a function of a player's personal honor system. The plea that a Server should not be penalized because the server only just touched the line and did not rush the net is not acceptable. Habitual foot faulting, whether intentional or careless, is just as surely cheating as is making a deliberate bad line call.

25. *Service calls in doubles.* In doubles the receiver's partner should call the service line, and the receiver should call the sideline and the center service line. Nonetheless, either partner may call a ball that either clearly sees.

26. *Service calls by serving team.* Neither the server nor server's partner shall make a fault call on the first service even if they think it is out because the receiver may be giving the server the benefit of the doubt. There is one exception. If the receiver plays a first service that is a fault and does not put the return in play, the server or server's partner may make the fault call. The server and the server's partner shall call out any second serve that either clearly sees out.

27. *Service let calls.* Any player may call a service let. The call shall be made before the return of serve goes out of play or is hit by the server or the server's partner. If the serve is an apparent or near ace, any let shall be called promptly.

28. *Obvious faults.* A player shall not put into play or hit over the net an obvious fault. To do so constitutes rudeness and may even be a form of gamesmanship. On the other hand, if a player

does not call a serve a fault and gives the opponent the benefit of a close call, the server is not entitled to replay the point.

29. *Receiver readiness.* The receiver shall play to the reasonable pace of the server. The receiver should make no effort to return a serve when the receiver is not ready. If a player attempts to return a serve (even if it is a “quick” serve), then the receiver (or Receiving team) is presumed to be ready.

30. *Delays during service.* When the server’s second service motion is interrupted by a ball coming onto the court, the server is entitled to two serves. When there is a delay between the first and second serves:

- the server gets one serve if the server was the cause of the delay;
- the server gets two serves if the delay was caused by the receiver or if there was outside interference. The time it takes to clear a ball that comes onto the court between the first and second serves is not considered sufficient time to warrant the server receiving two serves unless this time is so prolonged as to constitute an interruption. The receiver is the judge of whether the delay is sufficiently prolonged to justify giving the server two serves.

SCORING

31. *Server announces score.* The server shall announce the game score before the first point of the game and the point score before each subsequent point of the game.

32. *Disputes.* Disputes over the score shall be resolved by using one of the following methods, which are listed in the order of preference:

- count all points and games agreed upon by the players and replay only the disputed points or games;
- play from a score mutually agreeable to all players;
- spin a racket or toss a coin.

HINDRANCE ISSUES

33. *Talking during a point.* A player shall not talk while the ball is moving toward the opponent’s side of the court. If the player’s talking interferes with an opponent’s ability to play the ball, the player loses the point. Consider the situation where a player hits a weak lob and loudly yells at his or her partner to get back. If the shout is loud enough to distract an opponent, then the opponent may claim the point based on a deliberate hindrance. If the opponent chooses to hit the lob and misses it, the opponent loses the point because the opponent did not make a timely claim of hindrance.

34. *Body movement.* A player may feint with the body while the ball is in play. A player may change position at any time, including while the server is tossing the ball. Any other movement or any sound that is made solely to distract an opponent, including, but not limited to, waving the arms or racket or stamping the feet, is not allowed.

35. *Lets due to hindrance.* A let is not automatically granted because of hindrance. A let is authorized only if the player could have made the shot had the player not been hindered. A let is also not authorized for a hindrance caused by something within a player’s control. For example, a request for a let because the player tripped over the player’s own hat should be denied.

36. *Grunting.* A player should avoid grunting and making other loud noises. Grunting and other loud noises may bother not only opponents but also players on adjacent courts. In an extreme case, an opponent or a player on an adjacent court may seek the assistance of the Referee or a Roving Umpire. The Referee or official may treat grunting and the making of loud noises as a hindrance. Depending upon the circumstance, this could result in a let or loss of point.

37. *Injury caused by a player.* When a player accidentally injures an opponent, the opponent suffers the consequences. Consider the situation where the server’s racket accidentally strikes the receiver and incapacitates the receiver. The receiver is unable to resume play within the time limit. Even though the server caused the injury, the server wins the match by retirement. On the other hand, when a player deliberately injures an opponent and affects the opponent’s ability to

play, then the opponent wins the match by default. Hitting a ball or throwing a racket in anger is considered a deliberate act.

WHEN TO CONTACT AN OFFICIAL

38. *Withdrawing from a match or tournament.* A player shall not enter a tournament and then withdraw when the player discovers that tough opponents have also entered. A player may withdraw from a match or tournament only because of injury, illness, or personal emergency. A player who cannot play a match shall notify the Referee at once so that the opponent may be saved a trip. A player who withdraws from a tournament is not entitled to the return of the entry fee unless the player withdrew more than six days before the start of the tournament.

39. *Stalling.* The following actions constitute stalling:

- warming up longer than the allotted time;
- playing at about one-third a player's normal pace;
- taking more than 90 seconds on the odd-game changeover; or more than 120 seconds on the Set Break.
- taking longer than the authorized 10 minutes during a rest period;
- starting a discussion or argument in order for a player to catch his or her breath;
- clearing a missed first service that doesn't need to be cleared; and
- excessive bouncing of the ball before any serve.

A player who encounters a problem with stalling should contact an official. Stalling is subject to penalty under the Point Penalty System.

40. *Requesting an official.* While normally a player may not leave the playing area, the player may contact the Referee or a Roving Umpire to request assistance. Some reasons for visiting the Referee include:

- stalling;
- chronic flagrant foot faults;
- a Medical Time-Out
- a scoring dispute; and
- a pattern of bad calls.

A player may refuse to play until an official responds.

BALL ISSUES

41. *Retrieving stray balls.* Each player is responsible for removing stray balls and other objects from the player's end of the court. A player's request to remove a ball from the opponent's court must be honored. A player shall not go behind an adjacent court to retrieve a ball, nor ask a player for return of a ball from players on an adjacent court until their point is over. When a player returns a ball that comes from an adjacent court, the player shall wait until their point is over and then return it directly to one of the players, preferably the server.

42. *Catching a ball.* If a player catches a ball before it bounces, the player loses the point regardless of where the player is standing.

43. *New balls for a third set.* When a tournament specifies new balls for a third set, new balls shall be used unless all players agree otherwise.

MISCELLANEOUS

44. *Clothing and equipment malfunction.* If clothing or equipment, other than a racket, becomes unusable through circumstances outside the control of the player, play may be suspended for a reasonable period. The player may leave the court after the point is over to correct the problem. If a racket or string is broken, the player may leave the court to get a replacement, but the player is subject to code violations under the Point Penalty System.

45. *Placement of towels.* Place towels on the ground outside the net post or at the back fence. Clothing and towels should never be placed on the net.

Finding the tournament to register:

- Go to www.midwest.usta.com; Junior Tennis on left tool bar; Select Tournaments/Rankings; Find/Register for Tournament via TennisLink;
- Use the USTA Searchable Schedule
- Select a specific section or district by clicking on the drop down and highlighting one, or leave “All sections/districts” selected to search the entire database
- Input the Tournament ID number, if known
- Refine the search by using one or several of the search options, such as Keyword search, location, or date.
- Use the “Currently Registering” Quick search option to find all tournaments whose entry close date is within a 2-week period.

Registering for a tournament:

- Click on the Tournament name of the tournament for which you wish to register, to go to the Tournament Home Page.
- **Tournament Home page**-here you will see all of the information about that tournament. Click on the TennisLink Register Now link.
- **Register player page**-enter the USTA number of the person you wish to register for the tournament. The registration system will validate the player’s eligibility and USTA membership status, and will only allow entry into the appropriate events/divisions. If the player is not a member, or the membership is expired, you must apply or renew the membership before you can continue.
- **Choose event page**-verify that the information about the selected player is accurate. If not, follow the instructions to contact the USTA Membership Dept. Then select the events/divisions that you wish to register for, taking note of the message regarding the number of events for which one player can enter. **NOTE:** if entering a doubles event, you may choose to enter and pay for your doubles partner, or simply select your partner, and not pay, and have your partner come into the system to register and pay for their half of the entry. Continue
- **Cart Summary page**-shows a summary of the entries and the costs. If you wish to edit your entry, or continue searching for another tournament to register, you may click the appropriate button and do so. Otherwise, click Proceed to Checkout.
- **Credit card page**-input the cardholder name, credit card type and number, and expiration date, and the statement mailing address zip code. Then place the order. While waiting for the card to process, please be patient.
- **Confirmation page**-this page requires that the player acknowledge that they must print the confirmation page, or write down the confirmation number. It will be used if the player wants to withdraw or change an entry.

How to Withdraw from a tournament:

- If online registration is already closed you will need to contact the tournament director as only he/she can process the refund. If registration is still open please follow the steps below.
- If you need your confirmation number you can locate the number by following the steps outlined at the bottom of this page.

- To withdraw from an event please do the following:
 1. Go to [Http://tournaments.usta.com](http://tournaments.usta.com)
 2. Choose the edit registration link from the right side of the screen
 3. Choose the withdraw link from the left navigation menu
 4. Enter the USTA # of the person you wish to withdraw. Note that only eligible events will display.
 - If registration is already closed for an event you will need to contact the tournament organizer to withdraw and receive any applicable refund.
 5. Enter the confirmation number of the event(s) you wish to withdraw from. Enter the number as such: 123456-01. Choose withdraw.
 6. You will receive a message indicating that the withdrawal was successful. Note that the processing fee is non-refundable as indicated at the time of the original registration.
 - Please look for the refund back to your credit card within 3-5 business days. If you withdraw with the tournament director they will not be able to credit your card.
 - They will inform you of how they will process your refund.
 - If you do not have your confirmation number follows Steps 1 & 2. Then do the following:
 - Choose the locate confirmation number on the left navigation
 - Enter the USTA number and the Zip Code used at registration.
 - Choose Continue.
- A list of events and the corresponding charge and confirmation numbers will be displayed.