



The Basic Rules of Tennis

The aim,

Tennis is a game played on a rectangular court by either two players (singles) or four (doubles). Players stand on opposite sides of a net and use a strung racket to hit a ball back and forth to each other. Each player has a maximum of one bounce after it has been hit by their opponent to return the ball over the net and within the boundaries of the court. Once a player fails to do any of these three things, her opponent wins a point. The aim is to win enough points to win a game and enough games to win a set and enough sets to win a match. The first person to win six games wins a set. Matches are usually the best of three or the best of five sets.

The score does not go up in units of one or even in units of the same amount. The first point in a game is called 15 and the next 30. So you'd think that the next point should be 45 - but it isn't, it's 40. And the score of a player who has not won any points is not 'nil' or 'zero', but 'love'. This is said to come from the French word 'oeuf', which means "egg" and is shaped like a zero. The server's score is always called first by the umpire. So if Player A is serving to Player B and Player B wins the point, the score is love-15. If Player A wins the next point the score is 15-all, and so on.

The first player to win four points wins a game. So if a player wins four points straight their scoring will go 15-0, 30-0, 40-0 then game. The exception is if both players win three points each (i.e. 40-40) which is called deuce. Then the winner is the first player to then win two points in a row. Usually the first player to win six games wins a set but if the score becomes six-games-all, a tie break to 7 points is played and the winner takes the set. The player whose turn it was to serve in the set serves the first point of the tie-break. Their opponent serves the next two points and after that the serve rotates after every two further points. The players change ends after every six points, even if a player is between his two service points, and at the end of the tie-break.

Singles

A two-player game is known as a singles match. Players use the narrower singles court. The player who plays the ball first is the server and the person who returns it is the receiver. Players swap serve every game and change ends every other game. There is no penalty for serving out of turn but as soon as the mistake is discovered, the correct player must begin serving. The right to be server or receiver or the choice of ends is decided by tossing a coin or spinning a racket. The winner of the toss can choose one of four options:

To serve, in which case the opponent can choose ends, To receive, in which case the opponent can choose ends, The end of the court at which he or she wishes to begin the match, in which case the opponent can choose to serve or receive, To ask the opponent to choose

Doubles

The game of doubles is exactly the same, except the wider court is used. Players within a pair do not have to hit alternate shots. However, the serve rotates so that each player serves once every fourth game. For instance from Player A in Pair A, to Player B in pair B, back to Player C in Pair A and then to Player D in Pair B. Players can only change the order of serving and receiving at the end of a set. The server's partner and the receiver's partner may stand anywhere they like on the court during the serve, even if it obstructs play. Traditionally however, each player takes one side of the court.