



# Guidance for Tennis Players in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

Version 5.2 – Published 23 September 2020



TENNIS  
FOR BRITAIN

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

These COVID-19 guidelines apply to England only (read guidelines for Scotland [here](#), and for Wales [here](#)). 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](#) as 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.

### 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, 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 5 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.

As lockdown restrictions evolve, 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.

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 there can open safely at their venue. Where they chose 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](http://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

- Group limits and permitted organised activity is outlined under 'Tennis Activity' in Section 2 of these guidelines
- 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](#)
- 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
- 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 or activity organiser 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
- Play can take place indoor courts and bubble courts, subject to specific guidelines, as well as outdoor courts
- 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](http://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

- You can help control COVID-19 and travel safely by walking and cycling, if you can. Where this is not possible, use drive or use public transport - [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
- **[UPDATED]** Avoid using changing rooms where possible, other than for participants with disabilities or special needs whereby changing/shower facilities should be made available
- If takeaway catering facilities are open at the venue, respect social distancing whilst queuing for food and drink.
- **[UPDATED]** For indoor bars and restaurants, be aware that the Government guidelines for meeting people indoors differs from that for outdoors, and is limited to meeting in groups of no more than six people (while maintaining social distancing at all times). Attendees will also be required to wear [face coverings](#) except when seated at a table to eat or drink

## SECTION 2: DURING PLAY

### TENNIS ACTIVITY

- 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
- Play is permitted 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
- Restrictions on group numbers vary depending on if the activity is informal social play or organised group activity

### INFORMAL SOCIAL PLAY

- **For informal social play, group size is limited to a maximum of six people by law.** This means you can play tennis providing you only meet up with no more than 5 other people from different households and observe social distancing guidelines
- People should not go to a tennis venue socially in groups of more than six

### ORGANISED GROUP ACTIVITY

- Organised activity for larger groups, including coached sessions, club nights and competitions is permitted by the Government as an [exception to the limit of six](#), and so can continue, provided that venues, coaching providers and event organisers follow LTA COVID-19 secure guidelines
- **[NEW]** Organised group activity is defined as being activity organised by a national governing body, club, registered instructor/coach, business or charity, where in all cases organiser must conduct a risk assessment and take all reasonable steps to limit transmission of the coronavirus by reference to that risk assessment and all relevant COVID-19 Secure guidance. Further details are provided on the [Government website](#)
- For children, organised coach sessions should be limited to groups of no more than 15 children (plus coach(es), in line with guidance from the Department of Education on out of school settings
- **[NEW]** There are now also specific additional restrictions for indoor group tennis activity for adults that apply in addition to the above after the Government announced the introduction of new measures relating to indoor sport from Thursday 24 September. **Organised indoor group tennis activity for adults (including coached sessions and club nights held indoors) can still take place in larger numbers in COVID-19 secure venues, however, participants should be organised into sub-groups of no more than six people (excluding coaches) and these sub-groups should not mix.** There is an exemption for activity for disabled people, which can take place in any number, and organised group indoor activity for children is unaffected by this change and can continue as before in line with the limits for outdoors
- **[NEW]** When participating in any tennis activity indoors or outdoors, **participants must not mingle in groups of more than six before and after the activity**, while maintaining social distancing with those from another household at all times. If an organiser is not able to ensure this (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such

events should not take place. Attendees must avoid social interaction with anyone outside the group they are with, even if they see other people they know, at all times during their visit

- **[UPDATED]** The LTA recommends no more than 12 players on one full-size tennis court and surrounding areas at any one time (for adult activity indoors, this limit is six people), in order to ensure social distancing can be maintained

## COMPETITIONS

- LTA approved competitions (Grade 2 to 6), team competitions and recreational competition can be played as long as they adhere to the LTA's Return to Competition guidance, in line with the Government's [guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity participation events](#). Please note competitions may be limited in draw size depending on a range of factors including the COVID-19 secure capacity of the venue
- **[NEW]** While from Thursday 24 September new restrictions on indoor sporting activity have been imposed, **organised indoor competition at COVID-19 secure venues can continue to take place for larger draw numbers**, given activity on court for individual matches is under six people (this also means activity such as Club/County fixtures can continue to be held indoors). Off-court, individuals should limit their social interaction with others and not socialise in groups of more than six

## DISABILITY TENNIS **[NEW]**

- To support the resumption of the LTA's Open Court disability tennis programme, we have produced additional tennis specific guidance for inclusive and disability-specific activity:

### WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

- Player/coach using a tennis wheelchair for activity should be either:
  - Able to transfer yourself from your day chair into a tennis wheelchair
  - A person from your household or bubble can transfer the player from a day chair into a tennis wheelchair. This person should remain available throughout the session in case of an emergency or toilet break, if required support is needed
- Tennis wheelchairs owned by the venue should be sanitised pre and post activity
- If you are accessing a sports wheelchair owned by the venue you should only use the tennis wheelchair that has been assigned to you, no swapping of wheelchairs mid-session should be allowed

### VI TENNIS

- If verbal guiding is not appropriate, and you doesn't have appropriate support from someone from their household/bubble, then guiding people with sight loss for tennis activity can take place as long as both the guide and visually impaired player follow the mitigations outlined below:
  - Both people to wash hands or sanitise immediately before & after guiding
  - Both people wear a face covering
  - Use a tennis racket as a guiding aid, between the player and the guider. Player to hold grip end of the racket; guider to use head end of the racket
  - Volunteers that are supporting players with sight loss should stay with the assigned player for the duration of the activity. Volunteers should not mix with other players to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus

- If you cannot travel on their own, it is advised you should be accompanied by someone from your household or bubble. Outside of the activity itself the law in relation to the 'rule of six' still applies, and so players that normally meet at a centralised point to travel to the venue with other players should ensure you do not meet in a group of larger than six people

## 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 others they do not live with or are in a support bubble (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
- 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)
- 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 info)

## 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 & spread out in line with wider government guidance