

Guidance for Tennis Players in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

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

These COVID-19 guidelines apply to England only (read guidelines for Scotland and Wales at lta.org.uk/coronavirus). They have been produced in line with the Government roadmap for the easing of lockdown restrictions, and specifically the guidance for [grassroots sports guidance for the public and sport providers](#) as published on the Gov.uk website.

The guidance in this document is divided into the following sections:

- [Section 1](#): Before & After Play
- [Section 2](#): During Play
- [Section 3](#): Permitted Tennis Activity (Step 1 from 29 March)
- [Section 4](#): Provisional Tennis Activity Roadmap (Steps 2, 3 & 4)
- [Section 5](#): Additional Guidelines for Disability Tennis

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 a safe and naturally socially distant activity to take part in during the pandemic, whereby close person to person contact can be avoided.

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. These guidelines reflect the new restrictions set out in the Government's roadmap for easing lockdown, but the protocols and procedures included remain broadly the same as for previous restrictions.

As we move forward with the roadmap, will be indicating any key additions and updates to these guidelines for future versions 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 COVID-19 secure environments and in a way that helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They include measures to maintain hygiene and minimise unnecessary interactions with others.

Please be aware that venues and coaches will need to make an assessment based on their own individual circumstances as to how they can best operate safely, and so may put in place additional specific restrictions that are appropriate for their environment. Where they choose to do so please respect this.

Should you have any questions, you can refer to the [FAQs on the LTA website](#) and the [FAQs on the Sport England website](#).

We hope you enjoy getting on court!

SUMMARY GRID

To accompany this document, we have also produced a simple summary grid that clearly outlines permitted tennis activity for each step of the roadmap in England, which can be viewed and downloaded via the link below:

- [VIEW SUMMARY GRID: Permitted Tennis Activity](#)

SECTION 1: BEFORE & AFTER PLAY

STAY UP TO DATE

- Government information around coronavirus restrictions is available [here](#)
- Be aware guidance can change – ensure you have checked the latest update on the [LTA's dedicated coronavirus information page](#)
- These guidelines relate to Step 1 (Phase 2) of the Government roadmap – although provisional dates for moving to future steps of the roadmap have been set, be aware these are subject to review and confirmation one week in advance

WHO CAN PLAY

- Permitted activity and group limits are outlined under 'Tennis Activity' in Section 3 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](#), specifically:**
 - **A high temperature**
 - **A new, continuous cough**
 - **A loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste**
- If you have one or more of these symptoms or are living in a household with someone else who has a possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection you must 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. In any such instance, you should not leave your home to play tennis
- If you live with someone who is a contact of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 and as a result has been asked to self-isolate but they themselves do not have symptoms, then you yourself do not need to self-isolate and can continue to take part in tennis activity. However, you should take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing, handwashing and respiratory hygiene. Further information is available on the [Government website](#)
- People with health conditions that put them at increased risk should consider the risks of participating in group activities.

BEFORE LEAVING HOME & AFTER YOU RETURN

- Download the NHS Covid-19 Test & Trace app so you can scan in at a venue should they have a QR code on display
- 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 (changing facilities will be closed, although there is an exemption in place to allow use of changing facilities by disabled people)
- 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 only take place on outdoor courts
- Indoor sport and physical activity is not permitted and so indoor courts and bubble courts should be closed (except for specific groups – see Section 3 – Permitted Tennis Activity)
- The LTA's online booking platform, LTA Rally, has courts that can be booked in over 300 parks and clubs nationwide – visit www.lta.org.uk/rally
- Please note that to support NHS Test and Trace, venues and coaches may display a QR code or 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 your own, 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

- Travel to take part in recreational tennis activity is permitted, but you should minimise travel wherever possible
- You should not stay away from home overnight for sport and physical activity
- You can help control COVID-19 and travel safely by walking and cycling, if you can, or driving
- **[UPDATED]** Car sharing is not allowed, and for other means of transport you should avoid travelling with someone from outside your household or support bubble unless you can practise social distancing
- For further information, [safer travel guidance is provided on the Government website](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/safer-travel-guidance)
- 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
- Changing rooms should not be used, other than for participants with disabilities or special needs (any participants using them must maintain social distancing wherever possible, and minimise the time they spend in the changing area)
- If takeaway catering facilities are open at the venue, respect social distancing whilst queuing for food and drink

FACE COVERINGS

- Where access to indoor facilities is permitted (e.g. as part of the exemption for organised disability sport, or as a throughway to access outdoor courts) visitors are encouraged to wear masks in enclosed indoor public areas when not engaging in sport and physical activity where possible and practical

SOCIAL CONTACT LIMITS

- Players should be aware that while there are exemptions in place to permit organised outdoor group tennis activity in numbers greater than the permitted social contact limit (Rule of six), this exemption only applies to the actual physical activity itself and not any socialising before, after or around the activity
- Participants should therefore ensure they adhere to the rule of six before the activity starts and after it ends, and during any breaks in play

SECTION 2: DURING PLAY

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

Other than where players are from the same household or part of a support bubble, you should:

- Stay at least two metres away from others you do not live with or are in a support bubble with (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
- Limit your interactions with anyone outside of the group you 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
- See the Government's advice on [social distancing](#) for more info

HYGIENE

- Hand hygiene is imperative – hand sanitise at intervals if you have to touch communal surfaces and clean your hands before play and immediately after finishing (use alcohol gel if required)
- If you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve
- Avoid touching your face
- See the Government's advice on the [basics of good hygiene](#) for more info

EQUIPMENT & FACILITIES

- There is no requirement for players to use their own individual tennis balls (this was an initial precautionary measure put in place at the start of the pandemic and is no longer a recommended measure, in line with the latest [research](#)). It is recommended that the focus be put on other preventative measures such as maintaining hand hygiene.
- 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 made a personal decision 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

- Spectating is not permitted
- Where attendance of a parent/guardian (non-participant) is required, or a carer for a disabled player, it is permitted but should be off court and limited to one per player where possible

SECTION 3: PERMITTED TENNIS ACTIVITY

This section details permitted tennis activity from 29 March 2021 under Step 1 (Phase 2) of the Government's roadmap for the easing of lockdown restrictions in England.

Further detail on provisional permitted activity under Steps 2, 3 and 4 of the roadmap is provided in Section 4 of this document. An overview of this information is also provided in our summary grid:

- [VIEW SUMMARY GRID: Permitted Tennis Activity](#)

STEP 1: FROM 29 MARCH

OUTDOOR TENNIS

INFORMAL SOCIAL PLAY

- 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
- **For informal social play, group size is limited to a maximum of six people (or two households) 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
- A group made up of two households can include more than six people, but only where all members of the group are from the same two households (or support/childcare bubbles, where eligible)
- Social distancing must be maintained between people who do not live together or share a support bubble
- 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

1:1 COACHING

- Permitted in line with the LTA's Covid-19 Secure guidance for coaching activity

ORGANISED GROUP ACTIVITY

- Organised outdoor tennis activity for larger groups, including coached sessions, club nights and competitions is exempt from legal gathering limits and so is permitted by the Government as an [exception to the limit of six](#), provided that venues, coaching providers and event organisers follow LTA COVID-19 secure guidelines
- In order to be able to deliver activity for larger groups under this exception the organiser will have conducted a risk assessment and have taken reasonable steps to limit transmission of the coronavirus and deliver the activity for you safely

- **Organised group activity is defined as being activity formally organised by a national governing body, club, qualified instructor/coach, club, business or charity and follows the LTA's sport-specific guidance for tennis**
- If the sport is not organised by one of these groups (for example, some friends getting together to play) or the LTA's guidance is not being followed (for example, no risk assessment has been done or recommended measures being ignored), this is considered by the Government to be informal or self-organised sport and so it not exempt from the rule of six
- **For adults**, the venue/coach will decide the safe and appropriate group size limit depending on their environment and risk assessment for that activity, but group activity should be in line with the LTA's advised court limits of a maximum of 12 people per court
- **For children**, organised coached 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. Parent and child groups can also take place outdoors with a limit of 15 attendees (children under 5 do not count towards the attendee limit)
- Participants should adhere to social distancing with those from another household when not actively participating
- The exemption to permit large group numbers for sport only applies to the activity itself. Social interaction among group participants before and after any group tennis activity should only take place outdoors, and in separate and distinct groups consisting of up to six people or two households in line with the social contact limits, while maintaining social distancing at all times
- If an organiser is not able to ensure this (including when arriving at or leaving activity or socialising) then such events should not take place. **Failure to adhere to this could result in the exemption for larger numbers for group sport being removed.**
- Attendees should 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

COMPETITIONS

- Singles & doubles competitions are permitted for both juniors and adults
- LTA approved competitions, team competitions (such as Club/County Fixtures) and recreational competition can be played as long as they adhere to the LTA's Return to Competition guidance
- Draw sizes will be determined by the event organisers in line with their risk assessment and event delivery plan as per what is safe and appropriate for the event and the COVID-19 secure capacity of the venue
- Off-court, individuals should limit their social interaction with others and not socialise in groups of more than six

INDOOR TENNIS

INFORMAL SOCIAL PLAY

- Not permitted

1:1 COACHING

- Not permitted
- Exemptions in place for specific groups

ORGANISED GROUP ACTIVITY

- Not permitted
- Exemptions in place for specific groups

COMPETITIONS

- Not permitted
- Exemption in place for competitions for disabled people

INDOOR SPORT – EXEMPTIONS**DISABLED PEOPLE**

- The exemption has been put in place by the Government as recognition that disabled people face more barriers to taking part in sport and physical activity, so it's vital as much as possible is done to keep these opportunities accessible – not allowing organised indoor sport for them in this way would have a disproportionate impact on disabled people
- The indoor exemption is for formally organised activity for disabled people only (includes organised group activity and one to one coaching)
- Non-disabled people are not permitted to participate indoors under this exemption, except where necessary to enable the activity to take place (such as a carer or coach helping the disabled person to exercise)
- There is no limit on the group numbers for this activity – this should be set by the venue/coach in depending on what is safe and appropriate for their environment and the activity, in line with the risk assessment for that activity
- Further detail is provided in [Sport England's FAQs](#), and additional information on disability tennis provision is provided in Section 5 of this document

SPORT FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

- Indoor facilities can be used by schools and post-16 education and training providers (such as colleges and universities), for organised sport or individual fitness activities related to their curriculum. This could include running an indoor tennis for a school group, or a sport science student training for their sport in a gym. This exemption also applies to pupils in home education
- Indoor organised sport is permitted where part of formal education, and can take place indoors if necessary, but outdoor provision should be prioritised
- Indoor sport for under-18s can also take place at school as part of educational provision, or as part of wraparound care (see below)
- Further detail is provided in [Sport England's FAQs](#)

CHILDREN / U18s

- The definition of Under 18s for the purposes of this exemption includes young people who were 17 at the start of the academic year, even if they have turned 18 since then (i.e. all those aged under 18 on 31 August 2020)
- Indoor sport and physical activity for children is permitted, **but only** where this is part of wraparound childcare which specifically enables parents or carers to work, seek work, attend education, seek medical care or attend a support group.
- Indoor sport and physical activity for vulnerable children is permitted, regardless of whether this is part of wraparound care
- Further detail is provided in [Sport England's FAQs](#)

SECTION 4: PROVISIONAL TENNIS ACTIVITY ROADMAP

STEPS 2, 3 & 4

- The Government's roadmap is based on four steps. We have summarised below the key relevant aspects of the easing of restrictions for each future step, outlining what is known to date
- Before taking each step, the Government will review the latest data on the impact of the previous step against four tests around vaccination deployment and impact, infection rates and NHS hospitalisations, and status of any new variants of the disease. They will then announce one week in advance whether restrictions will be eased as planned.
- Our summary grid provides a provisional overview of what each of the steps mean for tennis activity. The grid and this section of this document will be updated with further detail ahead of moving to the next step of the roadmap
- Where children's sport is referred to, this relates to activity for people aged under 18 on 31 August 2020. Adult sport refers to activity for anyone aged 18 or over on 31 August 2020

STEP 2: No earlier than 12 April

- Indoor leisure facilities permitted to open for individual/household use (including 1:1 coaching)
- Indoor children's sport resumes for larger groups, including group coaching and competitions
- Hospitality venues including pubs reopen outdoors only, subject to social contact restrictions (rule of 6)
- Guidance to minimise domestic travel where possible remains

STEP 3: No earlier than 17 May

- Social contact restrictions relaxed to maximum 30 people outdoors (formally organised sport already exempt from this outdoors from 29 March)
- Rule of 6 or two households indoors
- Organised indoor 'adult group sports and exercise classes' resume (subject to taking place with 'rule of 6' bubbles)
- Large events permitted within the following capacity limits subject to strict Government guidance
- Hospitality resumes indoors
- Domestic overnight stays in hotels, hostels and B&Bs permitted in line with social contact restriction
- Possible restart of international travel (subject to review)

STEP 4: No earlier than 21 June

- Removal of limits on social contact
- Enable large events above Step 3 capacity restrictions, subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research programme, and potentially using testing to reduce the risk of infection, subject to further evaluation

SECTION 5: ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR DISABILITY TENNIS

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.

Further, detailed information on providing disability tennis activity during the coronavirus pandemic is available in our dedicated guidance document for Open Court venues.

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

- A player/coach using a tennis wheelchair for activity should ideally:
 - Be able to transfer yourself from your day chair into a tennis wheelchair
 - Have support from a person from your household or bubble that can transfer you 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
- While social distancing should be maintained where possible, in some circumstances people will need physical assistance from someone outside their household/bubble to be active. It's important players discuss this with the provider so they can consider your needs and preferences
- 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

VISUALLY IMPAIRED 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 your 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