



# Tennis

## Sport Rules

*Special Olympics*





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## **1. GOVERNING RULES**

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis shall govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon International Tennis Federation (ITF) Rules for tennis found at <http://www.itftennis.com/>. ITF or National Governing Body (NGB) rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis or Article I. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis shall apply.

Refer to Article 1, <http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/general/Sports-Rules-Article-1.pdf>, for more information pertaining to Codes of Conduct, Training Standards, Medical and Safety Requirements, Divisioning, Awards, Criteria for Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition, and Unified Sports.

## **2. OFFICIAL EVENTS**

The range of events is intended to offer competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities. Programs may determine the events offered and, if required, guidelines for the management of those events. Coaches are responsible for providing training and event selection appropriate to each athlete's skill and interest.

The following is a list of official events available in Special Olympics.

- 2.1 Individual Skills Competition
- 2.2 Singles
- 2.3 Doubles
- 2.4 Mixed Doubles
- 2.5 Unified Sports® Doubles
- 2.6 Unified Sports Mixed Doubles
- 2.7 Unified Team Tennis

## **3. RULES OF COMPETITION**

- 3.1 Divisioning
  - 3.1.1 An athlete shall be divisioned on the basis of their rating in accordance with Tennis Rating Form.
  - 3.1.2 A Tennis Rating Form must be submitted for each athlete with the registration package for the event.
  - 3.1.3 The Tennis Rating Form is provided in Section D of the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Tennis.
- 3.2 Match play
  - 3.2.1 A match will consist of one of the following.
    - 3.2.1.1 One Tie Break 6 game set using no-ad scoring with a margin of two games with a 7-point tie-break played at six all.
    - 3.2.1.2 Two Tie Break short sets using no-ad scoring with a 10 point match tie break to decide the match. In a short set, the first player/team who wins four games wins that set, provided there is a margin of two games over the opponent(s). If the score reaches four games all,



- a 7-point tie-break game shall be played. When the score in a match is one set all, one 10-point tie-break game shall be played to decide the match. This tie-break game replaces the deciding final set. Not recommended for athletes with a rating below 3.0.
- 3.2.1.3 Two tie break 6 game sets using no- ad scoring with a 10 point match tie break to decide the match. In a 6 game set the first player/team who wins 6 games with a margin of two games wins the set. A 7-point tie-break shall be played at six games all. When the score in a match is one set all, one 10-point tie-break game shall be played to decide the match. This tie-break game replaces the deciding final set. Not recommended for athletes with a rating below 6.0.
  - 3.2.1.4 In the two tie break 4 game or 6 game sets, there will be a three-minute rest period prior to the deciding 10-point tie-break.
  - 3.2.1.5 The No-Ad scoring system will be used for all match play. The No-Ad procedure is simply what the name implies: The first player to win four points wins the game, with the seventh point of a game becoming a game point for each player.
- 3.3 Singles Matches
    - 3.3.1 The receiver has the choice of advantage court or deuce court, the service on the seventh point, is to be delivered to the nominated court.
  - 3.4 Doubles Matches
    - 3.4.1 The receiving pair has the choice of advantage court or deuce court, the service on the seventh point, is to be delivered to player playing in the nominated court.
  - 3.5 Mixed Doubles Matches
    - 3.5.1 The player of the same gender as the server shall receive the deciding point. i.e. male to male or female to female.
  - 3.6 Unified Doubles Matches
    - 3.6.1 The service on the seventh point is to be delivered athlete to athlete or partner to partner.
  - 3.7 Score Calling
    - 3.7.1 The score calling may be either in the conventional terms or simple numbers, i.e., "zero, one, two, three, game."
  - 3.8 Coaching
    - 3.8.1 One designated Special Olympics coach may sit on court, (off the playing surface, in a chair located at the net post next to the umpire's chair) and may coach a player when the players change ends at the end of every odd game and during the three-minute rest period prior to the deciding tie-break, and not during a tie-break game. Changes of ends must be completed within 90 seconds.
  - 3.9 Tie-Breakers
    - 3.9.1 When two or more athletes or teams have the same final point score, the tie shall be broken as follows:
      - 3.9.1.1 First: the fewest number of sets lost in all matches
      - 3.9.1.2 Second: the most games won in all matches
      - 3.9.1.3 Third: the fewest number of games lost in all matches



- 3.9.1.4 Fourth: (other than for teams) head to head results
- 3.10 Unified Sports Doubles
- 3.10.1 Each Unified Sports doubles team shall consist of one player with an intellectual disability and one player without an intellectual disability, who have similar skills as defined by their SO rating (or ITN).
- 3.10.2 Each team shall determine their own order of service and selection of courts (ad or deuce).
- 3.11 Unified Team Tennis Event
- 3.11.1 Special Olympics Unified Team Tennis program rules are governed by ruling body ITF (International Tennis Federation) and Special Olympics Tennis Rules.
- 3.11.2 Unified Team Composition: Unified Tennis teams are composed of Unified doubles teams. Unified doubles team are comprised of one athlete with intellectual disabilities and one athlete without intellectual disabilities and who have similar skills, as defined by their rating score, and similar age.
- 3.11.3 Individual Rating - All tennis players will be rated on the eight-point Special Olympics Tennis Rating system. When assembling a Unified doubles team, the athlete and Unified partner need to be as closely aligned in ability as possible. Players either should have the same rating (Player A and Player B have a 4 rating) or vary by no more than 1 – 1.5 points (Player A has a 4 rating and Player B has a 5 rating).
- 3.11.4 Roster Sizes: Unified Team rosters consist of a minimum of 3 Unified doubles and a maximum of 6 Unified doubles teams. (Ex. A Unified Team's 3 doubles pairings should consist of: 1 Level 2, 1 Level 4 and 1 Level 5 if possible).
- 3.11.5 Competition: Competition may be head to head or an Invitational with many teams. During head-to-head competition, both schools, agencies or clubs, field the same number of doubles teams of the same Level and similar rating.
- 3.11.6 Formation of Team Divisions: During competition, Unified Tennis teams are divisioned based on Level and doubles team rating (combined individual rating scores). Tournament Directors pair like level and rating for competition.
- 3.11.7 Scheduling Doubles Matches: When scheduling matches for a competition, doubles teams of similar ability levels and with similar rating scores need to play each other.
- 3.11.8 Use of Designated Tennis Balls and Court Sizes for Competition: The ratings of doubles teams determine what type of tennis ball must be used in competition as well as the size of the court. A doubles team rating score is the combined score of the two players (i.e. Player A is a 4 and Player B is a 5 giving their doubles team a rating score of 9). Following are the requirements:
- 3.11.8.1 Unified Team Level 5: Doubles teams with a *combined rating* of 10 or higher must use a regulation yellow tennis ball on 78' court.
- 3.11.8.2 Unified Team Level 4: Doubles teams with a *combined rating* of 6.0 - 9.9 must use a 25% lower compression ball (yellow ball with green dot) and play on a 78' court.
- 3.11.8.3 Unified Team Level 2: Doubles teams with a *combined rating* of between 3.0 – 5.9 will play their matches on a 42' court (service boxes only) and use a red ball.



- 3.11.9 Substitutions: None are allowed for a doubles team during a match. If either player of a doubles team is unable to complete the match, his/her doubles team will forfeit.
- 3.11.10 Competition Formats: Following are the competition formats to be used which are based on the number of players on both teams. When one team has more players than the opposing team, those additional players compete in an exhibition singles match. *Example: Team A has 6 players and Team B has 8 players. Team B's two additional players play a singles exhibition match.* Each team has:
- 3.11.10.1 6 players: 3 Doubles scoring matches
  - 3.11.10.2 8 players: 4 Doubles scoring matches
  - 3.11.10.3 10 players: 5 Doubles scoring matches
  - 3.11.10.4 12 players: 6 Doubles scoring matches
- 3.11.11 Match Play Format: A match consists of the best 2 out of 3 short sets. The No-Ad scoring system will be used.
- 3.11.11.1 When a rain or time delay occurs, one 6 game may be used instead:
    - 3.11.11.1.1 In a 1 set match, the team that wins 6 games by a margin of 2 games wins the set.
    - 3.11.11.1.2 At 6 games all, a 10 point tie break is played.
    - 3.11.11.1.3 No-Ad scoring will be used.
- 3.12 Individual Skills Competition
- 3.12.1 Competition Managers must specify the type of ball to be used at each ISC competition.
  - 3.12.2 Level 1 ball is the red foam ball.
  - 3.12.3 Forehand Volley
    - 3.12.3.1 The athlete stands approximately one meter from the net with the feeder on the other side of the net, positioned halfway between the service line and the net. Each athlete is given five attempts to hit a ball safely over the net. The feeder underhand tosses each ball to the athlete's forehand side.
    - 3.12.3.2 The athlete scores 5 points for hitting into the service box into either service box.
  - 3.12.4 Backhand Volley
    - 3.12.4.1 Same as forehand volley except feeder sends the balls to athlete's backhand side.
    - 3.12.4.2 Each athlete is given five attempts.
  - 3.12.5 Forehand Groundstroke
    - 3.12.5.1 The athlete stands one meter behind the center (T) of the service line. The feeder is on the other side of the net, positioned half way between the service line and the net, underhand tosses the ball so it bounces once before reaching the athlete's forehand side. Each athlete is given five attempts.
    - 3.12.5.2 The athlete scores five points for hitting into either service box



- 3.12.6 Backhand Groundstroke
  - 3.12.6.1 Same as forehand groundstroke except the feeder sends the ball to the athlete's backhand side. Each athlete is given five attempts.
- 3.12.7 Serve — Deuce Court
  - 3.12.7.1 Each athlete is given five attempts to hit a legal serve from the right court to the deuce service box. A ball landing in the correct service box will count 10 points. A zero (0) score is recorded if the athlete commits a foot fault or fails to get the ball in the service box. A foot fault occurs when the athlete steps on or over the service line.
- 3.12.8 Serve — Advantage Court
  - 3.12.8.1 Same as serve to deuce court but from the left court to the advantage service box.
  - 3.12.8.2 Each athlete is given five attempts.
- 3.12.9 Alternating Groundstrokes with Movement
  - 3.12.9.1 The athlete begins one meter behind the center (T) of the service line. The feeder is on the other side of the net positioned halfway between the service line and the net. It alternates underhand tosses to the athlete's forehand and backhand sides. Each toss should land at a point which is both halfway between the service line and the net and halfway between the center service line and singles sideline. The athlete must be allowed to return to the center mark before feeding the next ball. Each athlete is given ten attempts.
  - 3.12.9.2 The athlete scores five points for hitting into either service box.
- 3.12.10 Final Score
  - 3.12.10.1 A player's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of the seven events which comprise the Individual Skills Competition.

#### **4. LEVELS**

The following is a guide to levels designed to provide competition opportunities to athletes of all abilities. Competition events for Levels 2-Level 5 are; Singles, Doubles, Mixed Doubles and Unified Doubles.

##### 4.1

Level 1	Individual Skills Competition Tennis Rating of 1.0 – 1.9	ITN 10.3-10.2	42' Court – Red foam ball
Level 2	Matchplay: Tennis Rating of 2.0 – 2.9	ITN 10.1	42' Court – Red ball
Level 3	Matchplay: Tennis Rating of 3.0 – 3.9	ITN 10	60' Court – Orange ball
Level 4	Matchplay: Tennis Rating of 3.0 – 4.9	ITN 9	78' Court – Green ball (Yellow ball with green dot)
Level 5	Matchplay: Tennis Rating of 5.0 – 8.0	ITN 8,7,6	78' Court – Yellow ball



- 4.2 Notes: Level 3 is intended as a transitional level for training purposes. It can be used for competition if sufficient entrants at this level are expected.
- 4.3 The SO Tennis Rating above are for singles, the range of rating should be doubled when athletes are playing doubles matches, i.e. Level 4 would become 6.0 – 9.9.
- 4.4 References:
  - 4.4.1 Tennis Rating Sheet
    - [http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Sports-Rules-Competitions/Tennis/Tennis\\_Rating\\_Sheet\\_2012.docx](http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Sports-Rules-Competitions/Tennis/Tennis_Rating_Sheet_2012.docx)
  - 4.4.2 Levels Court Diagram
    - [http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Sports-Rules-Competitions/Tennis/Levels\\_court\\_diagrams.docx](http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Sports-Rules-Competitions/Tennis/Levels_court_diagrams.docx)



# TENNIS SPORT RULES



## 5. SPECIAL OLYMPICS TENNIS RATING SHEET

Athlete's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Delegation: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Level 1 (athlete's at this level should complete the ISC Skills Testing)	Level	E. Second Serve		Level
Player just starting to play tennis		Double faults are common		2
<b>Section A through G do not need to be completed</b>				
<b>A. Forehand</b>		<b>Level</b>		
Hits inconsistent weak FH shots	2	Hits 2nd serves with control		6
Hits FH shots with little directional control	3	Hits 2nd serves with control and depth		7
FH has directional control of shots, but shots lack depth	4	Hits 2nd serves with spin, control and depth		8
FH has sufficient control to sustain a short rally and is developing depth	5	<b>F. Return of Serve</b>		<b>Level</b>
Rallies with control and depth, but has difficulty when shots are high or hard	6	Has difficulty returning serve		2
Rallies consistently with depth, becomes inconsistent when adding pace	7	Returns serve occasionally		3
Sustains an extended rally with direction, pace and depth	8	Returns 2nd serve consistently		4
<b>B. Backhand</b>		<b>Level</b>		
Hits inconsistent weak BH shots	2	Returns some 1st serves, returns 2nd serves consistently		5
Hits BH shots with little directional control	3	Returns 1st and 2nd serves consistently		6
BH has directional control of shots, but shots lack depth	4	Aggressive return of 2nd serve and consistent return of 1st serve		7
BH has sufficient control to sustain a short rally and is developing depth	5	Aggressive return of 1st and 2nd serves		8
Rallies with control and depth, but has difficulty when shots are high or hard	6	<b>G. Volleys</b>		<b>Level</b>
Rallies consistently with depth, becomes inconsistent when adding pace	7	Hits inconsistent volleys; avoids net		3
Sustains an extended rally with direction, pace and depth	8	Hits consistent FH volleys; BH volley is inconsistent		4
<b>C. Movement</b>		<b>Level</b>		
Stationary position; does not move to ball to hit shots	2	Hits consistent volleys; has problems approaching the net		5
Moves only 1-2 steps toward ball to hit shots	3	Has ability to approach the net and hits consistent volleys		6
Moves toward ball; but court coverage is poor	4	Comfortable moving to net, moves laterally well for both FH and BH volleys		7
Movement allows sufficient court coverage of most shots	5	Hits aggressive FH and BH volleys		8
Has good court coverage, reacts well enough to sustain a short rally	6	<b>Section</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Level</b>
Reacts quickly to the ball and has very good court coverage	7	A	Forehand	<b>Comments</b>
Exceptional court coverage, reacts quickly to the ball and recovers after each shot	8	B	Backhand	
<b>D. First Serve</b>		C	Movement	
<b>Level</b>		D	First Serve	
1st serve is weak	2	E	Second Serve	
Hits 1st serves in at a slower pace	4	F	Return of Serve	
Hits 1st serves with pace	6	G	Volleys	
Hits 1st serves with pace and control	8	<b>Total of Sections A through G</b>		
		divided by 7		
		<b>FINAL RATING</b>		

Rater's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Suggested Competition level for athletes

Tennis Rating of 1.0 – 1.9	Athlete should compete in:	Level 1 – Individual Skills Competition
Tennis Rating of 2.0 – 2.9	Athlete should compete in:	Level 2 – 42' Court – Red ball
Tennis Rating of 3.0 – 3.9	Athlete should compete in:	Level 3 – 60' Court – Orange ball
Tennis Rating of 3.0 – 4.9	Athlete should compete in:	Level 4 – 78' Court – Green ball
Tennis Rating of 5.0 – 8.0	Athlete should compete in:	Level 5 – 78' Court – Yellow ball