

Carolina Intramural Sports Paddle Tennis Rules 2009

1. Dimensions and Terminology

The *court* is a rectangle 44' long and 20' wide, laid out on a deck with a playing area 60' by 30' which is enclosed by a screen 12' high. The screen is held taut by a superstructure around the perimeter of the deck. Screens are made of 1" hexagonal galvanized or plastic coated wire mesh.

The court is divided across the middle by a *net*, the ends of which are attached to posts. The posts are 37" high and 18" outside the court. The height of the net at the posts is 37" and at center is 34". The net is held down taut and adjusted for height by a *vertical center strap* 2" wide.

The lines at the ends of the court, parallel to the net, are called *baselines*. The lines at the sides of the court, perpendicular to the net, are called *sidelines*. Two feet inside the sidelines and running parallel to them for the length of the court are the *alley lines*. Twelve feet from the net on either side and running parallel to it from alley line to alley line are the service lines. The segments of the alley lines between the service lines and the net are called the service sidelines. The area between the net and the service lines is divided in half by a line perpendicular to them. This line is called the center service line. Each baseline is bisected by an imaginary extension of the *center service line* called the *center mark*. The center mark appears as a line 4" long extending into the court at right angles to, and touching the baselines.

The area between the baseline and the service line is called the *backcourt*. The area between the service line and the net is called the *forecourt*, which in turn is divided into two *service courts*, deuce and ad. The area between the side line and the alley line is called the *alley*.

All lines are customarily 2" wide and all measurements are made to the outside of the lines from the net or the center of the center service line. This line is in both service courts and is itself centered on the imaginary center line of the court. All lines are within the court.

There is a space of 8' between each baseline and the *back screen*, and a space of 5' between each side line and the *side screen*. These spaces are part of the playing area, but they are not part of the court.

On either side of the court, or on both sides, an access door is cut into the superstructure. The door is located near the center of the side screen.

Colors for court and playing area must be approved by the APTA Rules Committee.

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2. Court Fixtures

Court fixtures are the posts, the net, the net hand crank, the cord (or metal cable) that holds up the net, the band across the top of the net, the center strap, the screens, the snow boards, the superstructure, the doors, the lighting poles and lights, any diagonal corner support beams within the enclosure, and, when they are present, the umpire and umpire's chair.

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3. The Ball and the Paddle

The ball is a rubber ball with flocking, conforming to APTA specifications for diameter, weight, bounce and other standards as set forth in [Appendix A](#).

The paddle is 18 inches (max) in overall length. The paddle is perforated with a number (87 max) of 3/8 inch holes. The surface of the paddle may be slightly textured. APTA paddle standards are set forth in

[Appendix B](#).

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4. Use of Paddle and Ball

A player may not carry a second paddle or a second ball during play, although it is permissible to use both hands on the paddle and to switch the paddle from hand to hand in the course of play.

With regard to ball change, play should continue with the same ball as long as it is in good condition. In tournament matches;

1. Play should continue with the same ball throughout a set, and the ball should not be changed during the set unless:
 - a. The ball becomes clearly defective, such as a crack or split in the ball, or
 - b. If, for any other reason, all four players agree that the ball should be changed during the set. Unless all four agree to the change to a new ball, play should continue with the same ball through the completion of the set (including tiebreaker).
2. At the end of a set, play **can** continue with the same ball; however, if any **one** player desires a new ball, the ball change is made.

COMMENT: *In certain circumstances -- for example, extremely cold conditions, or wet conditions causing rapid wear of the ball or the flocking -- a change of ball more frequently than one set may be warranted. In this situation, to avoid any confusion or disputes during play, it is desirable that the officials (or, in the absence of officials, the players) decide on a specific ball change pattern prior to starting the match; for example, every 5 games, or every 9 games.*

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5. Singles Play

The rules are the same except for the following: In Singles, the game is played within the standard singles court, two serves are allowed and no-ad scoring is used. The no-ad game point is served into the service court of the receiver's choice.

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6. Choice of Sides and Service

The choice of sides and the right to serve first or to receive first is decided by toss, which is generally accomplished by spinning the paddle.

The team that does not toss has the right to call the toss. The team winning the toss has the following options:

- a. The right to serve first, in which case the other team has the right to choose from which end of the court to receive;
- b. The right to receive first, in which case the other team has the right to choose from which end of the court to serve;
- c. The right to choose the end, in which case the other team has the right to elect to serve first or to receive first;
- d. The right to require the other team to make the first choice.

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7. Server and Receiver

After the toss has been concluded, the teams take their places on opposite sides of the net. The member of the serving team who elects to serve first becomes the server. The member of the receiving team who elects to play the deuce court becomes the first *receiver*.

The server must deliver service from a position behind the base line and between the center mark and the side line, diagonally crosscourt from the receiver.

The receiver may stand wherever he pleases on his own side of the net, on or off the court. Likewise the server's partner and the receiver's partner may take any position they choose on their own sides of the net, on or off the court.

The server alternates serving, first from behind the deuce court into the receiver's deuce court, then from behind the ad court into the receiver's ad court, and so on. Members of the receiving team alternate receiving service.

If the server serves from behind the wrong court and the mistake is not discovered until the point has been completed, the point stands as played, but thereafter the server must serve from the correct court according to the my_score. If the server serves from behind the wrong court and the mistake is detected by the receiving team after the service has been delivered and that team does not attempt to return the service, the server loses the point.

The ball served must pass over the net and hit the deck within the proper service court before the receiver may return it. Receiver may not volley the service, i.e., strike the ball before it has bounced. If he does so, receiver loses the point outright.

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8. Delivery of the Service

The service is delivered as follows: the server takes an initial position behind the baseline and between an imaginary extension of the center mark and the sideline, as described in [Rule 7](#). The server then projects the ball by hand into the air in any direction, and before it hits the ground strikes the ball with the paddle. At the moment of impact the service delivery is completed.

NOTE: *The service may be delivered overhand, underhand or sidearm as the server chooses. There is no obligation on server's part to inform receiver as to the server's intention, and server may vary the type of delivery.*

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9. Only One Service

Only one service is allowed. If the service is a fault, the server loses the point.

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10. Fault or Out

The service is a fault if:

- a. The server does not take a legal position as described in Rules [7](#) and [8](#);
- b. The server commits a footfault (see [Rule 11](#));
- c. The server misses the ball completely in attempting to strike it;
- d. The ball does not land in the proper service court;
- e. The ball served hits the server's partner;
- f. The ball touches a court fixture other than the net cord, post, band or center strap before it hits the deck. If it touches any of the above fixtures and then lands within the proper service court, it is in play.

COMMENT: *On service, line calls may be made by either member of the receiving team. The service is a fault if (a) the ball lands outside the proper service court or (b) the server violates the footfault rule. (See [Rule 11](#)). If an out call is made, play should stop. If there is a disagreement between the receiving partners as to whether the service is good or out, a let should be played, regardless of whether the service was returned in or out of play.*

In a match which is not being officiated, footfaults may be called by the server's opponents. The first call of a footfault on each server shall be a let. After this "grace fault", it is loss of point. Under tournament conditions, if there is an umpire or linesmen, they assume the responsibility for calling all footfaults. At any time in any round of a tournament match, any player is entitled to request a footfault judge and/or linesmen.

A ball in play (other than a service) is out if it does not land within the court on the proper side of the net after either crossing the net or touching the post, net, net hand crank, cord, band or center strap. Since all

parts of the lines bounding the court are deemed to be within the court, a ball that touches any part of a line is good. In an unofficiated match, the usual procedure is for the receiving team to make line calls on its own side of the net, i.e. you call lines on your side, the opponents call lines on their side. However, players may assist their opponents with "out" calls in the opponents' court, if requested. They should also call against themselves any ball that is clearly "out" on the opponents' side of the court if not called by the opponents.

If during play, a player makes an "out" call on a ball which the player could otherwise return, play should stop. If the partner disagrees and believes the ball was in, a "let" should be played. If a ball is not clearly seen by either player as in or out, or an "out" call is made on a ball which neither player could retrieve and the caller's partner believes the ball was "in", the point should be awarded to the opponents.
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11. Footfault

The server shall, throughout delivery of the service, up to the moment of impact of paddle and ball:

- a. Not change position by walking or running.
- b. Not touch, with either foot, any area other than that behind the baseline within the imaginary extension of the center mark and the sideline.

NOTE: *The server shall not by the following movements of his feet be deemed to "change position by walking or running:"*

- i. Slight movements of the feet which do not materially affect the location originally taken by the server;
- ii. An unrestricted movement of one foot, so long as the other foot maintains continuously its original contact with the deck;
- iii. Leaving the deck with both feet.

In a match which is not being officiated, footfaults may be called by the server's opponents. The first call of a footfault on each server shall be a let. After this "grace fault", it is loss of point. Under tournament conditions, if there is an umpire or linesmen, they assume the responsibility for calling all footfaults. At any time in any round of a tournament match, any player is entitled to request a footfault judge and/or linesmen.

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12. Receiving Team Must Be Ready

The server must not deliver the service until the receiving team is ready. If the receiver makes any attempt to return the ball, the receiver is deemed to be ready. Also, if the receiver attempts to return the ball it is deemed that the receiver's partner also is ready.

If the receiver claims not to be ready as a service is being delivered, the service shall be played again, provided the receiver does not attempt to return the ball. In such case, the receiver may not claim a fault should the service land in the net or outside the service court.

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13. A Let

In all cases where a let is called, the point is to be replayed.

The *service* is a let if it is delivered when the receiving team is not ready (see [Rule 12](#)).

A *ball in play* is a let if:

- a. It hits an overhanging obstruction such as a tree limb or a diagonal corner support beam;
- b. The ball becomes broken in the course of a point;

- c. Play is interrupted by an accidental occurrence such as a ball from another court bouncing into the court;
- d. It leaves the court through a hole in the screen, or gets stuck in the screen.

If a player loses an item of clothing (*i.e.*, *hat*, *glasses*, *accessory*), the opposing team has the option to call a let. This call must be made immediately, or the point will stand as concluded.

NOTE: *In any situation during the play of a point when a let may be called, if the player who could call the let does not do so immediately and permits play to continue, that decision is binding on his team. It is not reasonable to opt not to call a let, strike the ball for loss of point, and then ask for a let to be called.*

COMMENT: *For further discussion of other situations in which a let may be called, see [Rule 21](#).*
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14. Service Touching Receiving Team

If the service touches the receiver or the receiver's partner or anything they are wearing or carrying before the ball has hit the deck, the server wins the point outright. This ruling applies whether the member of the receiving team is hit while standing on or off the court.

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15. When Receiver Becomes Server

At the end of the first game of a set, the receiving team becomes the serving team. The partners decide between them who will serve first in each set. The order of service remains in force for that entire set.

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16. Serving or Receiving out of Turn

If a player serves out of turn, the player who should be serving must take over the serving from the point that the mistake is discovered. All points stand as played.

If an entire game is served by the wrong player the game score stands as played, but the order of service remains as altered, so that in no case may one player on a team serve three games in a row.

If the receiving team receives from the wrong sides of their court (as established in their first receiving game of the set), they must play that entire game from the "wrong courts," but must revert to the original sides of their court in the next game in which they are receivers.

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17. Ball Remains in Play

Once a ball is put into play by service, it remains in play until the point is decided, unless a fault or a let is called.

A player may not catch a ball which appears to be going out of bounds and claim the point. The ball is in play until it actually hits the screen on the fly, bounces on the deck out of bounds, bounces a second time after first bouncing in bounds, or goes over the screen. A player catching or stopping a ball and calling "out" before the ball is legally out loses the point for his team.

NOTE: *A ball which is hit by a player outside the net post and lands within the opponents' court is in play. See [Rule 20 \(c\)](#).*

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18. Loss of Point

A team loses the point if:

- a. As the receiving team, the ball bounces a second time, provided the first bounce was within the court.

COMMENT: Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether a player attempting to retrieve a ball, especially a drop shot, that has bounced once and is about to bounce again, actually strikes the ball before it bounces the second time. Propriety dictates that the player attempting to hit the ball is honor bound to call "knot up" if the player feels the ball did in fact bounce twice. A player who has any doubt in this situation will ask the nearest opponent, after the point has been decided, "Was it up?" If the opponent says no, the point should be conceded.

- b. A player returns the ball in such a way that it hits:
 - i. The deck on the other side of the net outside the sidelines or baseline;
 - ii. Any object, other than an opposing player, on the other side of the net outside the sidelines or baseline;
 - iii. The net, the post, net hand crank, cord, band or center strap and does not then land within the court on the other side of the net.
- c. A player volleys the ball and fails to make a good return, even when standing outside the court.

COMMENT: A player standing outside the court volleys at his own risk. It is not proper to volley the ball and simultaneously call it "out", for if the ball is volleyed it is in play.

- d. ~~A player touches or strikes the ball more than once in making a stroke, or makes overlong contact with the ball (i.e., both a double hit and a carry are illegal).~~ This is no longer a loss of point as of May 2008
- e. A player strikes the ball before it has crossed over to his side of the net, i.e. reaches over the net to strike the ball, making contact on the opponents' side of the net; for exception, see [Rule 20](#).
- f. A player is touched by a ball in play.

NOTE: It does not matter whether the player is inside or outside the court, whether he is hit squarely or his clothing merely grazed, or whether the contact is accidental or purposeful. If a ball touches anything other than a player's paddle it is loss of point.

- g. A player throws his paddle at the ball in play and hits it.
- h. A player bounces the ball over the screen and out of the enclosure or into a lighting fixture or light pole, whether or not the ball rebounds back into the court.
- i. A player or anything the player wears or carries, touches the post, net, net hand crank, cord, band or center strap, or the court surface on the opponents' side of the net, within the boundary lines, while the ball is in play. (See [Rule 17](#) regarding ball in play)
- j. A player strikes a ball in the court which then rebounds off a screen, comes back across the net and lands inside the lines without being touched by an opponent.

NOTE: If the point has already been concluded, it is not a violation to touch any of these fixtures. Also, if in rushing forward to retrieve a shot, a player's momentum carries him past the net post onto the opponents' side of the net, this is not loss of point unless the player actually steps inside the opponents' court or interferes with one of the opponents. Mere physical contact with an opponent is not loss of point unless such contact hinders the opponent.

When a player is standing at the net and the opponent hits the ball into the net in such a way that it pushes the net against the player's paddle or person, the net player loses the point. It does not matter that the ball was not going over the net. The net player loses the point because the player made contact with the net while the ball was still in play.

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19. Ball Touching Court Fixtures

If the ball in play touches a Court Fixture (as defined in [Rule 2](#)) after it has hit the deck within the

boundaries of the court, the ball remains in play and may be returned, so long as it has not hit the deck a second time within the court or the playing area.

EXCEPTIONS: If the ball hits a lighting fixture or pole, the point is concluded -- loss of point for striker. if the ball hits a diagonal corner support beam, it is a let.

In matches in which an umpire and an umpire's chair are inside the enclosure, a ball striking either the umpire or the chair prior to landing in the opponents' court is loss of point for the striker.

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20. Good Return

It is a good return if:

- a. The ball touches the net, posts, cord, net hand crank, band or center strap and then hits the deck within the proper court.
- b. The ball, served or returned, hits the deck within the proper court and rebounds or is blown back over the net, and the player whose turn it is to strike reaches over the net and plays the ball, provided that neither the player nor any part of the player's clothing or equipment touches the post, net, net hand crank, cord, band or center strap or the deck within the opponents' court, and that the stroke is otherwise good. (See also [Rule 21](#), Interference).
- c. The ball is returned outside the post, either above or below the level of the top of the net, whether or not it touches the post, provided that it then hits the deck within the court.

NOTE: *It is not a good return if the ball is hit through the open space between the net and the post.*

- d. A player's paddle passes over the net after the player has returned the ball, provided that the ball had crossed to the player's side of the net before being struck by the player and that the stroke is otherwise good.

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21. Interference

In case a player is hindered in making a stroke by anything not within his control, the point is replayed.

COMMENT: If a tree branch or a ball from another court should interfere with play, a let should be called immediately. However, if a player bumps into his own partner or is interfered with by a court fixture, that is not grounds for a let.

In the situation covered by [Rule 20](#), if the player who is attempting to strike the ball is willfully hindered by his opponent, the player is entitled to the point by reason of interference, whether such interference is verbal or physical. However, if it is agreed that such interference was unintentional, a let should be called.

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22. Scoring

- a. **The Game:**

The first point is called 15, although it is also commonly called 5.

The second point is called 30.

The third point is called 40.

The fourth point is Game.

When both teams score 15, or both score 30, the score is called "15 all" or "30 all". When both teams score 40, the score is called Deuce.

The next point after Deuce is called Advantage for the team winning it, thus Advantage Server (or more usually Ad In), if the serving team wins, and Advantage Receiver (or Ad Out), if the receiving team wins.

If the team with the Advantage wins the next point, it wins the game. If the other team wins that point, the score reverts to Deuce. This continues indefinitely until one or the other team wins two points in a row from Deuce, which wins the game. Zero or no points is called Love. A game that is won "at love" means that the losing team won no points.

b. The Set:

The team which first wins 6 games wins the Set.

However, the winning team must have a margin of 2 games, and a set played under the traditional rules continues until one team has such a 2 game margin, e.g., 8-6 or 11-9.

A set that is won "at love" means that the losing team won no games.

When the score in games is 6-all, the APTA recommends the use of the 12 point tiebreaker (See [Appendix C](#)). Tournament Committees should announce in the tournament rules whether the tiebreaker is to be played.

c. The Match:

A match is best of three sets with a tiebreaker in all sets. See Guidelines below for exceptions.

COMMENT: *In matches played without an umpire, the server should announce the point scores as the game goes on, and the game score at the end of the service game. Misunderstandings will be averted if this practice is followed.*

Guidelines For Number of Sets To Be Played In Different Events

2 out of 3 sets, with tiebreaker in all sets.

- Women's Ranking Tournaments
- Men's Ranking Tournaments
- Senior National Championships
- Junior National Championships
- Men's Singles National Championship

2 out of 3 sets, with tiebreaker in all sets, except third set of finals played out.

- Women's National Championship
- Men's National Championship
- Mixed National Championship

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23. When Teams Change Sides

Teams change sides at the end of the first, third, fifth and every subsequent odd-numbered game of each set.

When a set ends on an odd total of games, e.g., 6-3, the teams "change for one" -- that is, they change sides for one game, and then change sides again after the first game of the next set. When the set ends on an even total of games, e.g., 6-4, the teams "stay for one" and then change sides after the first game of the next set.

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24. Continuous Play

Play shall be continuous from the first service of the first game until the conclusion of the match, except:

- a. For rest periods permitted by tournament officials;
- b. When changing sides on the odd games, a maximum of one minute is allowed for players to towel off, change equipment, rest, etc.
- c. During a service game, the server is permitted a maximum of 20 seconds between the finish of play on a point and the delivery of the next service.
- d. Play shall never be suspended, delayed or interfered with for the purpose of enabling a player to recover his strength or to receive instruction or advice. The umpire shall be the sole judge of such suspension, delay or interference, and after giving due warning, the umpire may disqualify the offender. No allowance may be made for natural loss of physical condition such as cramps, faintness or loss of wind. Consideration may be given by the umpire for accidental loss of physical ability or condition.

NOTE 1: *In the event of an accident, a fall, collision with a net post, a sprained ankle, and the like, up to a 10-minute suspension in play may be authorized. A default will be mandatory if play is not resumed immediately after the suspension .*

NOTE 2: *If a player's clothing, footwear, or equipment becomes out of adjustment in such a way that it is impossible or undesirable for the player to continue, the provisions in Note 1 shall apply.*

COMMENT: *The intent of the Continuous Play Rule is to prevent unauthorized rest periods for players who are tired and to discourage stalling tactics for whatever purpose. In the event of an accident, the umpire or tournament chairman shall consider a temporary suspension of play.*

If a match is adjourned for a legitimate reason, e.g. a sudden rainstorm, when the match is resumed (a) the teams are entitled to a full warmup and (b) the match must begin precisely where it left off, with the same game and point score, same server, same sides of the court, and same order of service.

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25. Only One Hit

In the course of making a return, only one player may hit the ball. If both players, either simultaneously or consecutively, hit the ball, it is an illegal return and loss of point. Mere clashing of paddles does not constitute an illegal return, provided that only one player strikes the ball.

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26. Balls Off Screens

If a ball in play or on the service hits the deck in the proper court and then touches any part of the back or side screens, or both screens, or the horizontal top, rails, or the snow boards, it may be played, so long as it does not bounce on the deck a second time before being hit by the player.

NOTE: *A ball taken off the screen must be returned into the opponents' court. It may not be caromed back indirectly by being hit from paddle to screen and thence into the opponents' court.*

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Appendix:

A. Ball Performance Standards and Acceptable Tolerances

The APTA has established the following Performance Standards and Acceptable Tolerances for the ball.

The APTA reserves the right to withhold or terminate approval if the Association feels the standards have not been met by a manufacturer, and to approve balls for sanctioned play as it sees fit.

- i. Bounce Test for Rebound - Balls conditioned at 70 degrees F. for 24 hours, then dropped from 90 inches to a concrete slab, and the rebound measured. Bounce to be measured from bottom of ball. Rebound, acceptable tolerance: 43" thru 51 "
- ii. Weight Test - Acceptable Tolerance: 70 gms. thru 75 gms.
- iii. Diameter Test - Measure diameter along two perpendicular axes of the ball. Both readings must be within tolerance. Diameter = 2 1/2". Acceptable Tolerance +/- 3/64".

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Appendix:

B. Platform Tennis Paddle Standards and Acceptable Tolerances

	Standard
Total Length	18" maximum
Holes-Number	87 maximum
Holes-Diameter	3/8" maximum
Edge (or Rim)	May be flush, or wrap-around, with a maximum depth into the paddle face of 1/2" and a maximum height above the surface of the paddle face of 1/8".
Surface Finish	Slight texturing permissible
Surface	Flat (not curved)

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Appendix:

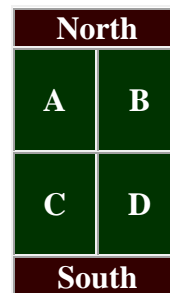
C. The APTA Approved 12-Point Tiebreaker for Platform Tennis

At six games all, the players continue to serve in order and from the same side as before. The server of the first point of the tiebreaker will serve only one point and that to the Ad Court. Each player will then, in normal service rotation, serve twice; first to the Duece Court then to the Ad Court. The single point served by the initial server of the tiebreaker results in an immediate change of sides and teams will continue to change sides in the normal pattern as if the server had served an entire game. First team to win 7 points wins set, although if it be 6-points all, a team must win the tiebreaker by a margin of two points. The set shall be scored 7-6. The team receiving service for the first point of the tiebreaker shall begin serving the next set from the opposite side from which it received the first point. The teams shall change sides after the first game.

A started serving the set from N Side.
It's 6 games all and it's A's turn to serve again.

1. A serves Once (Ad Court) from N Side. Change Sides
2. C* serves twice from N side. (Duece Court first; Ad Court second)
3. B serves twice from S Side. (Duece Court first; Ad Court second)
Change Sides
4. D serves twice from S Side. (Duece Court first; Ad Court second)
5. A serves twice from N side. (Duece Court first; Ad Court second)

Change sides and repeat this order until one team reaches 7 points or wins by 2 points after each team reaches 6 points.



6. Team C-D starts serving next set from N Side.

7. Teams change sides after 1 game

**Assuming that C has been following A in service order.*

If a ball change is called for on a tiebreaker game, the change should be deferred until the second game of the following set, to preserve the alternation of the right to serve first with the new ball.