

Guidance for Tennis Players in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

Version 6 – Published 2 December 2020 (updated 4 December)

(Including guidance for tiers of local restrictions)



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 following the initial easing of lockdown and recent implementation of regional tiered restrictions, and the new Government guidance for [grassroots sports guidance for the public and sport providers](#) published on 1 December, as well as the previous guidance for [providers of out of school settings](#) 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 (by Tier)
- Section 4: 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.

LOCAL RESTRICTIONS

This document now covers guidelines for tennis activity across all tiers of the [different tiers of local restrictions](#) that were introduced by the Government from 2 December. A summary of the three tiers can be viewed on the LTA website, and you can see which areas of the country fall under which tier on the [Government website](#) or via the [postcode checker](#).

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

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 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 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 focus on 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 how they can best operate 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](#). You can also read the [FAQs on the Sport England website](#).

We hope you enjoy getting on court!

SECTION 1: BEFORE & AFTER PLAY

STAY UP TO DATE

- Government information around coronavirus restrictions is available [here](#)
- Check which tier you are in [here](#), and what that means for tennis [here](#)
- 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

- 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](#)**
- If you are symptomatic or 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, 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 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 and other people living with them 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.
- 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](#), you can consider playing tennis, always maintaining social distancing and with robust hand and respiratory hygiene – the specific guidance varies by tier with further guidance is [available here](#)

EXEMPTIONS

- Exemptions are in place for some groups to permit additional indoor tennis activity in Tier 2 and Tier 3 (see Section 3), with these groups defined as follows:
 - **Disabled people:** Sport for people with disabilities is exempt from legal gathering limits. This means that people with disabilities can take part in sport in any number (indoor and outdoor)
 - **Under 18's:** All supervised activity for children (including outside school) is exempt from legal gathering limits, and can happen in any number. This

includes organised team sports and all supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s. In a change from the pre-lockdown guidance, **this now includes young people who were 17 at the start of the academic year, even if they turn 18 during the remainder of that academic year**

- **Education:** Sport for the purpose of education is also exempt. This means that school sport such as PE, and curriculum-related sport for students in further and higher education (e.g. a student studying a sport course being able to practice), are exempt from legal gathering limits. However, for those who do not fall under the exemption below, this does not cover extra-curricular sport (such as playing for a college team) so these activities can only take place within the guidance set out above

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 if possible – even when the changing facilities are opened use of these should be minimised 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
- Where tiered restrictions allow, play can take place indoor courts and bubble courts 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
- 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

- Guidance on travel for tennis activity varies depending on the tier of local restrictions – refer to the summary grid for details of what guidelines are in place for each tier. However, for all tiers, travel within an area to take part in recreational tennis activity is permitted

- You can help control COVID-19 and travel safely by walking and cycling, if you can, or driving - [safer travel guidance is provided on the Government website](#)
- Avoid travelling with someone from outside your household or support bubble unless you can practise social distancing
- In tier 2 areas: you should aim to reduce the number of journeys you make, where possible
- For tier 3 areas: you are advised not to travel into or out of tier 3 areas, including for playing tennis, unless this is necessary to enable individual exercise (or exercise for people from the same household or support bubble). Where this is necessary or, for example to access the venue you are a member of, you should only travel a short distance and stay as local as possible
- For tier 3 areas: travel is also permitted into or out of the area where it is necessary to enable sport for disabled people, sport for educational purposes, or supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s, to take place, but should still be minimised where possible
- 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
- Minimise use of changing rooms and showers where possible, other than for participants with disabilities or special needs. Any participants using them must adhere to gathering limits while indoors, 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
- For indoor bars and restaurants, be aware that the Government guidelines for meeting people indoors differs from that for outdoors, and are different for each tier of restrictions – in some areas these facilities may be required to close

FACE COVERINGS

- Face coverings are required in most indoor settings. However, while this does not include gyms, leisure centres and other sport facilities, when not engaging in sport and physical activity visitors are encouraged to wear masks in enclosed public areas where possible and practical
- For indoor bars and restaurants, attendees will be required to wear [face coverings](#) except when seated at a table to eat or drink

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 (where permitted), 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
- 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 [social distancing](#) 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 across all tiers, but should be off court and ideally be limited to one per player where possible
- Rules for legal gathering limits vary by tier, but supporters, parents, and other spectators must adhere to legal gathering limits whilst attending events
- **It is important that spectators adhere to these limits; in addition to being legal requirements punishable by fines, those violating the measures are endangering public safety and undermining the case for safe sport to be allowed to take place**
- If spectators do not follow these legal requirements, the club or provider can ask them to leave or not to attend again. Where there are serious or

consistent issues with spectators, the sport's national governing body may consider sanctions including suspending the relevant sport provider from running any leagues, matches, training sessions or other events or activities until this has been addressed

- There is an additional risk of infection where people are shouting or singing in close proximity to others (particularly indoors and when face-to face). Spectators should minimise shouting or raising their voices

SECTION 3: TENNIS ACTIVITY BY TIER

SUMMARY GRID

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

TIER 1 (MEDIUM)

Find out if your area is in this tier on the [Government website](#) or by using the [postcode checker](#).

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 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
- 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
- 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 adults, group activity should be in line with the LTA's advised court limits of a maximum of 12 people per court
- 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

- 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

COMPETITIONS

- Singles & doubles competitions are permitted for both juniors and adults
- LTA approved competitions (Grade 2 to 6), 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. Please note competitions may be limited in draw size depending on a range of factors including 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

- Permitted as per Tier 1 outdoors

1:1 COACHING

- Permitted as per Tier 1 outdoors

ORGANISED GROUP ACTIVITY

- 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 per court (excluding coaches) and these sub-groups should not mix
- There is an exemption for activity for disabled people and tennis for education purposes, which can take place in any number, and organised group indoor activity for U18's which can continue in line with the limits for outdoors (max group of 15)
- 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

COMPETITIONS

- While restrictions on indoor sporting activity have been imposed, **organised indoor singles and doubles 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

TIER 2 (HIGH)

Find out if your area is in this tier on the [Government website](#) or by using the [postcode checker](#).

OUTDOOR TENNIS

- **Restrictions for playing tennis in Tier 2 outdoors are the same as for Tier 1 outdoors.**

INDOOR TENNIS

INFORMAL SOCIAL PLAY

- Singles play permitted for adults
- Doubles permitted for two households playing against each other (no mixing between households)
- Singles & doubles for disabled people and supervised activity for U18s permitted

1:1 COACHING

- Permitted for a coach with one household/bubble
- It is also permitted for a coach to oversee two players from different households on opposite sides of the net playing singles
- A coach can oversee multiple sets of two adult players playing singles across several courts, as long as the players do not interact

ORGANISED GROUP ACTIVITY

- The majority of organised indoor group tennis activity for adults cannot take place
- **[NEW]** Adults can however take part as an individual in an exercise class indoors, but only if they take place in a way that ensures participants avoid any inadvertent physical contact and proximity so that individuals stay separate and distinct from those from other households throughout the entirety of the activity, as well as before and after. Where that cannot be ensured, these activities should not go ahead
- **[NEW]** Tennis exercise classes are therefore permitted to take place for adults indoors in Tier 2 on this basis. Cardio tennis, for example, is specifically recognised as a group fitness exercise version of tennis and so sessions for adults can take place indoors, but only on the proviso that they are adapted to be coach to player interaction only with no rally based drills taking place between players, and measures are put in place to ensure no inadvertent physical contact or proximity
- There is an exemption for all organised indoor group tennis activity for disabled people and tennis for education purposes, which can take place in any number, and organised indoor group activity for U18's which can continue in line with the limits for outdoors (max group of 15)
- Participants in these groups must still not mingle 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

COMPETITIONS

- While restrictions on indoor sporting activity have been imposed, organised indoor singles competition (not doubles) at COVID-19 secure venues can continue to take place for larger draw numbers, given activity for individual matches is limited to two people on court
- Singles and doubles competitions can take place for disabled people and U18s
- Off-court, individuals should not socialise with anyone outside of their own household or bubble

TIER 3 (VERY HIGH)

Find out if your area is in this tier on the [Government website](#) or by using the [postcode checker](#).

OUTDOOR TENNIS

- **Restrictions for playing tennis in Tier 3 outdoors are the same as for Tier 1 outdoors, but participants should be aware there are additional restrictions limiting travel in to and out of Tier 3 areas**

INDOOR TENNIS

INFORMAL SOCIAL PLAY

- Not permitted for adults other than those from the same household / bubble only
- Singles & doubles for disabled people and supervised activity for U18s permitted

1:1 COACHING

- Permitted for a coach with one household/bubble

ORGANISED GROUP ACTIVITY

- Organised indoor group tennis activity for adults cannot take place
- There is an exemption for activity for disabled people and tennis for education purposes, which can take place in any number, and organised group indoor activity for U18's which can continue in line with the limits for outdoors (max group of 15)
- Participants in these groups must still 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

COMPETITIONS

- Organised competition for adults cannot take place
- Singles and doubles competitions can take place for disabled people and U18s
- Off-court, individuals should not socialise with anyone outside of their own household or bubble

SECTION 4: 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.

These guidelines apply to all tiers of local restrictions.

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