

**Christopher Newport University
Office of Recreational Services
Intramural Sports
Table Tennis
-Rules of the Game-**

The rules below are specific for the sport indicated above and do not include intramural program policies which all participants must abide by. For a complete description of intramural policies, participants should view the Intramural Program Manual.

National Intramural Recreational Sport Association (NIRSA) rules govern any rule not mentioned in this document.

1. The Table

- 1.1** The table shall be in surface rectangular, 274 cm. (9 ft.) in length, 152.5 cm. (5 ft.) in width. It shall be supported so that its upper surface, termed the playing surface, shall lie in a horizontal plane 76 cm. (2 ft. 6 in.) above the floor.
- 1.2** It shall be made of any material and shall yield a uniform bounce of about 23 cm. (8 3/4 in.) when a standard ball is dropped from a height of 30 cm. (12 in.) above the surface.
- 1.3** The playing surface shall be dark colored and matt, with a white line 2 cm. (3/4 inch) wide along each edge.
 - 1.3.1** The lines along the 152.5 cm. (5 ft.) edges or ends shall be termed end lines, and they shall be regarded as extending indefinitely in both directions.
 - 1.3.2** The lines along the 274 cm. (9 ft.) edges or sides shall be termed side lines.
- 1.4** For doubles, the playing surface shall be divided into halves by a white line 3 mm. (1/8 in.) wide, running parallel with the side lines, termed the center line. Permanent marking of the center line shall not invalidate the table for singles play. The center line shall be regarded as part of each right half court.
- 1.5** The playing surface shall be considered to include the top edges of the table, but not the sides of the table top below the edge.

2. The Net Assembly

- 2.1** The playing surface shall be divided into two "courts" of equal size by a vertical net running parallel to the end lines.
- 2.2** The net assembly shall consist of the net, its suspension, and the supporting posts, including the clamps attaching them to the table.
- 2.3** The net shall be suspended by a cord attached at each end to an upright post 15.25 cm. (6 in.) high, the outside limits of the post being 15.25 cm. outside the side lines.
- 2.4** The net, with its suspension, along its whole length, shall be 15.25 cm. (6 in.) above the playing surface. The bottom of the net, along its whole length, shall be as close as possible to the playing surface and the ends of the net shall be as close as possible to the supporting posts.

3. The Ball

- 3.1** The ball shall be spherical, with a diameter of 40 mm. The ball shall weigh 2.7 gm.
- 3.2** The ball shall be made of celluloid or similar plastic material and shall be white or orange and matte.

4. The Racquet

- 4.1** The racquet may be of any size, shape, or weight but the blade shall be flat and rigid.
- 4.2** At least 85% of the blade by thickness shall be of natural wood. An adhesive layer within the blade may be reinforced with fibrous material such as carbon fiber, glass fiber, or compressed paper but shall not be thicker than 7.5% of the total thickness or 0.35 mm, whichever is the smaller.
- 4.3** A side of the blade used for striking the ball shall be covered with either ordinary pimples rubber with pimples outward having a total thickness including adhesive of not more than 2 mm. or sandwich rubber with pimples inwards or outward having a total thickness including adhesive of not more than 4 mm.
 - 4.3.1** Ordinary pimples rubber is a single layer of non-cellular rubber, natural or synthetic, with pimples evenly distributed over its surface at a density of not less than 10 per sq. cm. and not more than 50 per sq. cm.
 - 4.3.2** Sandwich rubber is a single layer of cellular rubber covered with a single outer layer of ordinary pimples rubber, the thickness of the pimples rubber not being more than 2 mm.
- 4.4** The covering material shall extend up to but not beyond the limits of the blade, except that the part nearest the handle and gripped by the fingers may be left uncovered or covered with any material and may be considered part of the handle.
- 4.5** The blade, any layer within the blade, and any layer of covering material or adhesive shall be continuous and of even thickness.
- 4.6** The surface of the covering material on a side of a blade or of a side of the blade if it is left uncovered, shall be matt, bright red on one side and black on the other.
- 4.7** Slight deviations from uniformity of color or continuity of covering due to fading, wear, or accidental damage may be ignored provided they do not significantly change the characteristics of the surface.
- 4.8** At the start of a match and if he changes his racquet during a match, a player shall show his opponent and the umpire the racquet he is about to use and shall allow them to examine it.
- 4.9** If a player breaks his racquet during a game, he shall replace it immediately with another racquet which he has brought with him to the playing area or one which is handed to him in the playing area. A racket shall not be changed in an individual match unless it is accidentally damaged so badly that it cannot be used. If a player changes a racket during an individual match without notification, the umpire shall suspend play and report to the referee.

4.10 The covering material on a side of the blade used for striking the ball shall be of a brand and type currently approved by the USATT and shall be attached to the blade so that the trademark and ITTF logo (if applicable) are clearly visible near the edge of the striking surface.

4.10.1 Rackets complying with all requirements of the rules for Hard Bat rackets shall be legal in all USATT tournaments except the US Open and North American Open Team Championships. Hard Bat rules are shown at www.hardbat.com/

4.11 If a player strikes the ball in play with a side of the blade whose surface does not comply with the requirements of the Rules, his opponent will be awarded a point.

5. Definitions

5.1 A rally is the period during which the ball is in play.

5.2 The ball is in play from the last moment at which it is stationary on the palm of the free hand before being intentionally projected in service until it touches anything other than the playing surface, the net assembly, the racquet held in the racquet hand or the racquet hand below the wrist, or until the rally is otherwise decided a let or a point.

5.3 A let is a rally of which the result is not scored.

5.4 A point is a rally of which the result is scored.

5.5 The racquet hand is the hand carrying the racquet.

5.6 The free hand is the hand not carrying the racquet.

5.7 A player strikes the ball if he touches it in play with his racquet, held in the racquet hand, or with his racquet hand below the wrist.

5.8 A player obstructs the ball if he or anything he wears or carries, touches it in play when it is traveling toward the playing surface and has not passed beyond the end line, not having touched his court since last being struck by his opponent.

5.9 The server is the player due to strike the ball first in a rally.

5.10 The receiver is the player due to strike the ball second in a rally.

5.11 The umpire is the person appointed to decide the results of each rally.

5.12 The assistant umpire is the person appointed to assist the umpire. The stroke counter is the person appointed to count strokes under the expedite system.

5.13 Anything that a player wears or carries includes anything that he was wearing or carrying at the start of the rally.

5.14 The ball shall be regarded as passing over or around the net assembly if it passes under or outside the projection of the net assembly outside the table.

6. Service

6.1 Service shall start with the ball resting freely on the open palm of the server's stationary free hand.

6.2 The server shall then project the ball near vertically upwards, without imparting spin, so that it rises at least 16 cm after leaving the palm of the free hand and then falls without touching anything before being struck.

6.3 As the ball is falling, the server shall strike it so that it touches first his court and then, passing directly over or around the net assembly touches the receiver's court. In doubles the ball shall touch successively the right half court of the server and receiver.

6.4 From the start of service until it is struck, the ball shall be above the level of the playing surface and behind the server's end line, and it shall not be hidden from the receiver by any part of the body or clothing of the server or his doubles partner.

6.5 It is the responsibility of the player to serve so that the umpire or the assistant umpire can see that he complies with the requirements for a good service.

6.5.1 If there is no Assistant Umpire, and the umpire is doubtful of the legality of a service he may, on the first occasion in a match, warn the server without awarding a point.

6.5.2 If subsequently in the match a service by that player or his doubles partner is of dubious legality, for same reason or for any other reason, the receiver shall score a point.

6.5.3 Whenever there is a clear failure to comply with the requirements for a good service, no warning shall be given and the receiver shall score a point.

6.5.4 Exceptionally, the umpire may relax the requirements for a good service where he is satisfied that compliance is prevented by physical disability.

6.6 If, in attempting to serve, a player fails to strike the ball while it is in play, his opponent will be awarded a point.

7. A Good Return

7.1 The ball, having been served or returned in play, shall be struck so that it passes directly over or around the net assembly and touches the opponent's court, either directly or after touching the net assembly.

7.1.1 If the ball, having been served or returned in play, returns with its own impetus over the net, it may be struck so that it touches directly the opponent's court.

8. The Order Of Play

8.1 In singles, the server shall first make a good service, the receiver shall then make a good return, and thereafter, server and receiver alternately shall each make a good return.

8.2 In doubles, the server shall first make a good service, the receiver shall then make a good return, the partner of the server shall then make a good return, the partner of the receiver shall then make a good return, and thereafter, each player alternately in that sequence shall make a good return.

9. A Let - A rally is a let

- 9.1** If in service the ball, in passing over or around the net assembly, touches it, provided the serve is otherwise good or is obstructed by the receiver or his partner.
- 9.2** If the service is delivered when the receiving player or pair is not ready, provided that neither the receiver nor his partner attempts to strike the ball.
- 9.3** If, the failure to make a good service or a good return or otherwise to comply with the Laws is due to a disturbance outside the control of the player.
- 9.4** If play is interrupted by the umpire or assistant umpire.
- 9.4.1** To correct an error in the order of serving or receiving or ends.
- 9.4.2** To introduce the expedite system.
- 9.4.3** To warn or penalize a player.
- 9.4.4** Because the conditions of play are disturbed in a way which could affect the outcome of the rally.

10. A Point - Unless the rally is a let, a player shall score a point:

- 10.1** If his opponent fails to make a good service.
- 10.2** If his opponent fails to make a good return.
- 10.3** If, after he has made a good service or a good return, the ball touches anything other than the net assembly before being struck by his opponent.
- 10.4** If the ball passes beyond his end line without touching his court, after being struck by his opponent.
- 10.5** If his opponent obstructs the ball, except as provided in Rule 9.1.
- 10.6** If his opponent strikes the ball twice successively.
- 10.7** If his opponent strikes the ball with a side of the racquet blade having an illegal surface.
- 10.8** If his opponent, or anything he wears or carries, moves the playing surface.
- 10.9** If his opponent, or anything he wears or carries, touches the net assembly.
- 10.10** If his opponent's free hand touches the playing surface.
- 10.11** If, in doubles, his opponent strikes the ball out of sequence established by the first server and first receiver.
- 10.12** As provided under the expedite system.
- 10.13** If the umpire assesses a penalty point against his opponent.

11. A Game

- 11.1** A game shall be won by the player or pair first scoring 11 points unless both players or pairs score 10 points, when the game shall be won by the first player or pair subsequently gaining a lead of 2 points.

12. A Match

- 12.1** A match shall consist of the best of any odd number of games
- 12.2** Play shall be continuous throughout, except for authorized intervals.

13. Intervals

Play shall be continuous throughout a match except that any player is entitled to:

- 13.1** An interval of up to 1 minute between successive games of a match.
- 13.2** Brief intervals for toweling after every 6 points from the start of each game and at the change of ends in the last possible game of a match.
- 13.3** A player or pair may claim one time-out period of up to 1 minute during a match.
- 13.3.1** In an individual event the request may be made by the player or pair or by the designated advisor. In a team event it may be made by the player or pair or by the team captain.
- 13.3.2** The request for a time-out, which shall be made only when the ball is out of play, shall be made by making a "T" sign with the hands.
- 13.3.3** On receiving a valid request for a time-out the umpire shall suspend play. Play will be resumed when the player or pair who called it is ready to continue or at the end of one minute, whichever is sooner.
- 13.4** The referee may allow a suspension of play of the shortest practical duration, and in no circumstances more than 10 minutes, if a player is temporarily incapacitated by an accident, provided that in the opinion of the referee the suspension is not likely to be unduly disadvantageous to the opposing player or pair.
- 13.5** A suspension shall not be allowed for a disability which was present or was reasonably to be expected at the beginning of the match, or where it is due to the normal stress of play. Disability such as cramp or exhaustion, caused by the player's current state of fitness or by the manner in which play has proceeded, does not justify such an emergency suspension, which may be allowed only for incapacity resulting from an accident, such as injury caused by a fall.
- 13.6** If anyone in the playing area is bleeding, play shall be suspended immediately and shall not resume until that person has received medical treatment and all traces of blood have been removed from the playing area.
- 13.7** Players shall remain in or near the playing area throughout a match except with the permission of the referee. During intervals between games they shall remain within 3 meters of the playing area under the supervision of the umpire.

14. The Choice of Ends and Serves

- 14.1** The choice of ends and the right to serve or receive first in a match shall be decided by lot and the winner may choose to serve or receive first or to start at a particular end.

14.2 When one player or pair has chosen to serve or receive first or to start at a particular end, the other player or pair shall have the other choice.

14.3 After each 2 points have been scored the receiving player or pair shall become the serving player or pair and so on until the end of the game, unless both players or pairs score 10 points or the expedite system is in operation, when the sequence of serving and receiving shall be the same but each player shall serve for only 1 point in turn.

14.4 In each game of a match the pair who has the right to serve first shall decide which of them shall do so and in the first game of a match, the opposing pair shall then decide which partner will receive first. In subsequent games of a match, the first server having been chosen, the first receiver shall be the player who served to him in the preceding game.

14.5 In doubles, at each change of service the previous receiver shall become the server and the partner of the previous server shall become the receiver.

14.6 The player or pair serving first in a game shall receive first in the next game of the match, and in the last possible game of a doubles match the pair due to receive next shall change their order of receiving when first one pair scores 5 points.

14.7 The player or pair starting at one end in a game shall start at the other end in the next game of the match and in the last possible game of a match the players or pairs shall change ends when first one player or pair scores 5 points.

15. Out of Order of Serving, Receiving or Ends

15.1 If a player serves or receives out of his turn, play shall be interrupted and shall continue with that player serving or receiving who should be server or receiver respectively at the score that has been reached according to the sequence established at the beginning of the match, and in doubles, to the order or serving chosen by the pair having the right to serve first in the game in which the error is discovered.

15.2 If by mistake the players have not changed ends when ends should have been changed, play shall be interrupted as soon as the error is discovered and the players shall change ends.

15.3 In any circumstances, all points scored before the discovery of an error shall be reckoned.

16. The Expedite System

16.1 Except where both players or pairs have scored at least 9 points, the expedite system shall come into operation if a game is unfinished after 10 minutes play or at any earlier time at the request of both players or pairs.

16.1.1 If the ball is in play when the game is interrupted, play shall restart with service by the player who served in the rally that was interrupted.

16.1.2 If the ball was not in play when the game was interrupted, play shall restart with service by the player who received service in the immediately preceding rally.

16.2 Thereafter, each player shall serve 1 point in turn. If the receiving player or pair makes thirteen successive good returns, the receiver shall score a point.

16.3 If the expedite system is introduced, or if a game lasts longer than 10 minutes, all subsequent games of the match shall be played under the expedite system.

17. Equipment

17.1 Players shall not choose balls in the playing area.

17.1.1 Whenever possible players shall be given the opportunity to choose one or more balls before coming to the playing area. The match shall be played with one of these balls, taken at random by the umpire.

17.1.2 If a ball has not been chosen before players come to the playing area, the match shall be played with a ball taken at random by the umpire from a box of those specified for the competition.

17.1.3 If a ball has to be replaced during a match, the replacement shall be provided according to the procedures of Rules 17.1.1 and 17.1.2.

17.2 Unless otherwise authorized by the umpire, players shall leave their racquets on the table during intervals.

18. Practice

18.1 Players are entitled to practice on the match table for up to 2 minutes immediately before the start of a match but not during normal intervals. The specified practice period may be extended only with the permission of the referee.

18.2 During an emergency suspension of play, the referee may allow players to practice on any table, including the match table.

18.3 Players shall be given reasonable opportunity to check and familiarize themselves with any equipment, which they are to use. However, this shall not automatically entitle them to more than a few practice rallies before resuming play after the replacement of a damaged ball or racquet.

19.1 Advice.

19.1.1 In a team event, players may receive advice from anyone.

19.1.2 In an individual event, a player or pair may receive advice only from one person, designated beforehand to the umpire. If the players of a doubles pair are from different associations, each may designate an adviser. If an unauthorized person gives advice, the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him away from the playing area.

19.1.3 Players may receive advice only during the intervals between games,

during a time-out or during other authorized suspension of play. If any authorized person gives advice at other times, the umpire shall hold up a yellow card to warn him that any further such offense will result in his dismissal from the playing area.

19.1.4 After a warning has been given, if in the same team match or the same match of an individual event anyone again gives advice illegally, the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him away from the playing area, whether or not he was the person warned.

19.1.5 In a team match, the dismissed adviser shall not be allowed to return, except when required to play, until the team match has ended. In an individual event, he shall not be allowed to return until the individual match has ended.

19.1.6 If the dismissed adviser refuses to leave or returns before the end of the match, the umpire shall suspend play and report to the referee.

19.1.7 These regulations shall apply only to advice on play and shall not prevent a player or captain, as appropriate, from making a legitimate appeal nor hinder a consultation with an interpreter or association representative on the explanation of a juridical decision.

19.2 Misbehavior.

19.2.1 Players and coaches shall refrain from conduct that may unfairly affect an opponent, offend spectators or bring the game into disrepute. Examples are: abusive language, deliberately breaking the ball or hitting it out of the playing area, kicking the table or surrounds or disrespect to match officials.

19.2.2 If at any time a player or coach commits a serious offence the umpire shall suspend play and report immediately to the referee. For less serious offences the umpire may, on the first occasion, hold up a yellow card and warn the offender that any further offence is liable to incur penalties.

19.2.3 If a player who has been warned commits a second offence in the same individual or team match, the umpire shall award one point to the player's opponent and after a further offence he shall award two points to his opponent, each time holding up a yellow and a red card together.

19.2.4 If a player against whom 3 penalty points have been awarded in the same individual or team match continues to misbehave the umpire shall suspend play and report immediately to the referee.

19.2.5 A warning or penalty incurred by either player of a doubles pair shall apply to the pair, but not to the non-offending player in a subsequent individual match of the same team match. At the start of a doubles match the pair shall be regarded as having incurred the higher of any warnings or penalties incurred by either player in the same team match.

19.2.6 If a coach who has been warned commits a further offence in the same individual or team match the umpire shall hold up a red card and send him away from the playing area until the end of the team match, or in an individual event, the end of the individual match.

19.2.7 The referee shall have power to disqualify a player from a match, an event, or a competition for seriously unfair or offensive behavior whether reported by the umpire or not. As he does so he shall hold up a red card.

19.2.8 A player who is disqualified from 2 individual matches of a team or individual event shall automatically be disqualified from that team event or individual competition.

19.2.9 The referee may disqualify for the remainder of a competition anyone who has twice been sent away from the playing area during that competition.

19.2.10 Cases of serious misbehavior shall be reported by the referee to the USATT disciplinary committee

20. Clothing (Dress Code)

20.1 Playing clothing shall normally consist of a short-sleeved shirt and shorts or skirt, socks, and playing shoes; other garments, such as part or all of a track suit, shall not be worn during play except with the permission of the referee.

20.2 Clothing may be of any color or colors except that:

20.2.1 The main color of a shirt, skirts, or shorts, other than sleeves or collar of a shirt and trimming along side seams or near the edges, shall be clearly different from that of the ball in use.

20.3 A playing garment may carry:

20.3.1 The maker's normal trademark, symbol, or name contained within a total area of 24 sq. cm.

20.3.2 Not more than 3 clearly-separated advertisements contained within a combined total area of 200 sq. cm. on the front or side of a shirt and one advertisement, contained within a total area of 200 sq. cm. on the back of a shirt.

20.3.3 Not more than two advertisements contained within a combined total area of 80 sq. cm. on shorts or a skirt.

20.4 Any markings or trimming on the front or side of a playing garment and any objects such as jewelry worn by a player shall not be so conspicuous or brightly reflecting as to unsight an opponent.

20.5 Players must wear socks and soft-soled shoes.

20.6 Clothing shall not carry designs or lettering which might cause offense or bring the game into disrepute. Absolutely no playing without a shirt, no cutoffs, no jeans, and no tank shirts. Women may wear sleeveless blouses.

20.7 Opposing players and pairs shall wear clothing that is sufficiently different to enable them to be easily distinguished by spectators. If the players or pairs cannot agree on who will change if necessary, the umpire will decide by toss.

20.8 Any question of the legality or acceptability of playing clothing shall be decided by the referee.

20.9 Warm-up suits should not be worn during play unless with special permission of the referee. It is his discretion of conformity to the above requirements.

21. Disabled Competition

21.1 Disabled table tennis players are divided into ten divisions or classes using a functional classification system.

21.2 Classes one to five compete in wheelchairs and classes six to ten play standing.

21.3 Separate events may be held for each class and sex or various combinations may be used.

21.4 For more information on classification of disabled athletes, contact the USATT Disabled Players Committee.

21.5 Standing disabled players follow all standard rules; there are a few modifications for wheelchair play.

Wheelchair Rules

- 21.6** The table shall allow access to wheelchairs without obstructing player's legs and shall allow access to two wheelchairs for doubles matches (no cross bars between end legs).
- 21.7** The court length may be reduced, but should not be less than 8 meters long and must be enclosed by surrounds.
- 21.8** A service in singles shall be as in Paragraph 6 except that a let shall be called if in service the ball:
- 21.8.1** Leaves the table by either of the receiver's side lines (on one or more bounces) or
- 21.8.2** On bouncing on the receiver's side returns in the direction of the net or
- 21.8.3** Comes to rest on the receiver's side of the playing surface.
- 21.9** However, if the receiver strikes the ball before it crosses a side line or takes a second bounce on his side of the playing surface, the service shall be considered good and no let shall be called.
- 21.10** Class 1 and 2 players are not required to project the ball upward from the palm of the free hand. Players in these classes may hold the ball and project it upward in any manner. Regardless of the method, no spin may be imparted to the ball and the ball still must rise at least 6 inches from the hand.
- 21.11** Responsibility still rests with the server to serve so that the umpire or assistant umpire can check the legality of the serve.
- 21.12** During play, a player may touch the playing surface with the free hand, only to restore balance after striking the ball (provided the playing surface is not moved).
- 21.13** The playing surface shall not be used as a support with the free hand while playing the ball.
- 21.14** A player or pair shall score a point if the footrest or a foot of their opponent touch the floor during play.
- 21.15** In team and class singles events, no part of the body above the knees may be attached to the chair, as this could improve balance. Below knees, strapping is allowed.
- 21.16** Should a player require some strapping or binding for medical reasons, this should be noted on their classification card and will be taken into account when assessing the player's class.
- 21.17** In open events, strapping and other aids are allowed.
- 21.18** No player shall compete in a wheelchair event unless he has been given an appropriate disabled classification.

Wheelchair Doubles

- 21.19** Service shall be as above for singles play, but the ball may leave the table by the side line of the receiver's right half-court.
- 21.20** The server shall first make a good service and the receiver shall make a good return, and thereafter either player of a pair may return the ball.
- 21.21** During play, no part of a player's wheelchair shall cross the vertical plane of an imaginary extension of the table's center line. If it does, the opposing pair shall score a point.

22. Playing Conditions

- 22.1 Space.** The normal playing space for each table should be 14 m. (46 ft.) long, 7 m. (23 ft.) wide and 5 m. (16 ft.) high.
- 22.2** For further information on Playing Conditions, please refer to the USATT *Tournament Guide*.