



THE  
ETIQUETTE  
OF  
PLATFORM  
PADDLE TENNIS

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## INTRODUCTION

Platform paddle tennis is a keenly competitive sport and one in which by tradition, good sportsmanship, integrity, and respect are key elements. It is a game which is played for fun, but there is also an active winter tournament circuit.

The game is played in accordance with the rules of platform tennis as published by the American Platform Tennis Association. For easy reference these are included at the rear of this booklet. The main purpose of this booklet, however, is to discuss the **etiquette** of platform tennis play. Etiquette is an area in which, unlike rules which are generally more specific, there may be differences of opinion, or judgement may have to be exercised. Since platform tennis is one of the most rapidly growing sports in the country and is attracting many new participants, the APTA believes it desirable to provide these guidelines on the etiquette of the game. In doing so, it is recognized that "etiquette" does have its "gray areas". Therefore these comments are offered, not as hard and fast rules, but as suggested guidelines of behavior. In any case, it is hoped that the tradition of the game will be maintained through a continued high degree of sportsmanship and mutual respect and that this booklet may assist in furthering that tradition by offering worthwhile suggestions on personal behavior while playing this rewarding game.



## FOOTFAULT

The footfault is the area in which the greatest amount of self-control is required by the player. Seldom will fellow players advise another player that he is foot-faulting for fear of "offending". Yet if, in serving, he is stepping on or over the baseline before striking the ball, he is breaking the rules just as seriously as if he faults on the serve by hitting it into the net or out. The fact is that players may not know they are foot-faulting. This is because, in serving, many players make a slight movement of the forward foot, which is legal, but in doing so they step on or over the line. A player can find out if he is foot-faulting by asking a fellow player to observe his serve. Conversely, a polite comment to another player, who himself will not ask, may not be out of order. One subtle way to handle this is to ask a player if he would like to have you call his foot-faults during his practice serves.

Other than the above suggestions, it has become generally accepted etiquette not to call the opposing server on foot-faults during either a friendly or tournament game which does not have linesmen. The server is "on his honor" not to foot-fault; therefore all players should exercise the self-control necessary to stay behind the line while serving. Apart from the rule-breaking and etiquette aspects of foot-faulting, linesmen will call footfaults in the semi-finals and finals of major tournaments and any player who is in the habit of footfaulting regularly may have a difficult time adjusting to a correct service procedure under the pressure of tournament competition. The usual result is that he will lose points on called foot-faults or serve a higher percentage of faults in trying to adjust to a legal service.

So, in this area above all others, etiquette says that players must exercise the greatest degree of self-control in order not to break the rules and/or offend others. Practice serving legally, and check with others by asking that your serve be watched.

## LINE CALLS

In most tournaments, lines will be called by linesmen in the semi-finals and finals. In tournament rounds prior to that and in other friendly games where there are no linesmen, the general rule is that all lines are called by the receiving team, i. e. you call lines on your side, the oppo-

nents call lines on their side. Each side should, obviously, call the ball in or out honestly and without regard to the play situation. The decision of the team whose responsibility it is to make the call is final. The following refinements are suggested:

1. If an "out" call is not promptly made, the ball is considered "in" and play should continue.

2. On receipt of service, the receiver's partner should call the deep service line and the center line. The receiver should call the wide serve on the outside line. The receiver's partner may do so also.

3. If a member of the receiving team makes an "out" call but his partner thinks the ball was in, a "let" should be played.

4. A certain (hopefully minimum) amount of friendly kidding about opponents' line calls is inevitable. But etiquette dictates that the opponents' line calls are to be respected and considered final. In the end, the balance of "questionable" calls will usually balance off between the two sides.

### **"LET" BALL ON SERVICE**

The server's partner is closest to the net and in the best position to hear a "let". He should call it promptly, loud and clear. It is also permissible for either member of the receiving team, if he believes he heard the ball tick the net, to promptly call a "let", in which case the service should be played again.

### **BALL HITTING PLAYER**

If a ball touches any part of a player's body (including any part of the hand) either before landing or hitting the screen on the player's side or after landing fairly in the court, it results in loss of point. Even if the player is standing outside the boundaries of the court, the point is lost if the ball strikes him before landing on the deck or hitting a screen. Often a ball striking a player just barely grazes his clothing or hair. It is good etiquette for the player himself to declare that the ball touched him and award the point to the opponents. It is not good etiquette for any player to accuse or declare categorically that the ball hit an opponent and thereby "claim" the point. He may, if he wishes, politely ask if it did, but the determination of whether or not the ball hit the player is that player's to make, and his integrity and decision in the matter should be respected.



## THE "TICK"

A ball which is "ticked" is barely grazed with the paddle, and often when this happens only the player who "ticks" the ball can hear or feel it. It is good etiquette for the player doing so to promptly declare that he touched the ball and award the point to the opponents. It is poor etiquette for opponents to declare that a player "ticked" the ball and claim the point. The best person to determine whether the ball was ticked is the player himself and it is good etiquette to respect his integrity and decision.

## TOUCHING THE NET

Touching the net with any part of the body or the paddle during play is loss of point. A player touching the net should promptly declare that he did so and award the point to the opponents.

## THE "CARRY"

The "carry" is difficult to define, but the word fairly suggests what occurs, and it is illegal. It is an excessively long contact between the paddle and the ball, as distinct from a cleanly struck shot. The carry is illegal because, if practiced, it could give a player an unfair advantage. The carry can inadvertently occur in almost any playing situation, but one of the most common is when two teams are having a rapid exchange of volleys near the net and a player, in moving backward while receiving and attempting to return a shot, unintentionally "catches" or "cradles" the ball on his racket. If in his judgment he has "carried" the ball he should so declare it and award the point to the opponents. A "double hit" can also occur in this situation and in the more difficult wire shots. This is a version of the "carry" wherein the player in attempting to return a shot hits the ball twice in quick succession. It is rare but it does happen. And since it is illegal it should be promptly declared by the player and the point awarded to the opponents.

## RETURN THE BALL TO THE SERVER

When a point is completed, if the ball is lying on your side of the court and your opponent is serving, it is good etiquette to pick up the ball and either give it to your opponent's net man who can give it to the server, or gently bounce the ball to the server in his next service position, waiting a moment if his back is turned before "feeding"

it to him. All too often players simply kick or push the ball in the opponents' direction or arbitrarily hit the ball just anywhere over to the other side. This makes the server walk around chasing the ball, it is discourteous, and it results in a slow-moving game. It is good etiquette to do your part by picking up the ball and getting it to the server in an easy and accommodating manner. If everyone does this it will be easier on you when your turn comes to serve! And finally, above all, resist the temptation of venting aggravation at missing an easy shot by ferociously slamming the ball about the court after the point is lost.

### **THE LADY IN MIXED DOUBLES**

This can be a sensitive subject. However no document on etiquette would be complete without touching at least briefly on the subject. Specifically the question is how the man should play against the lady in an opposing mixed doubles team, particularly if the lady is the weaker of the two partners. There are two schools of thought. The first, which is more often applied in friendly games, says that the man should be "gentlemanly" by not driving the ball hard at the lady at net or in returning her serve and should not work her corner disproportionately. This does have the advantage of balancing play between opposing partners, it is "gentlemanly", and it avoids the label of "picking on the lady". In an otherwise close contest it can also lead to losing the match. The other school of thought says that a team is a team, sex makes no difference and the normal strategy to beat a team which may be unbalanced is to play the weaker partner. If that partner happens to be a lady, so be it. And if the lady does not like that, she need not play (or can get better). Both viewpoints have merit and both have their strong advocates. It is not uncommon to see a "double standard" practiced, with the first school of thought being applied in friendly, social games where winning or losing may be unimportant or even in an unbalanced tournament match; and the second standard being applied in a keenly contested tournament match. We believe it best to leave this choice to one's personal discretion.

### **PUNCTUALITY**

Platform paddle tennis is a doubles game requiring four players. It is good etiquette to be on time for a pre-arranged game and not inconvenience the other players by being late.



# PLAYING RULES

Except as otherwise noted, the rules of play of the United States Lawn Tennis Association shall govern.

## 1. Balls Off Wires

If a ball in play or on the serve hits the platform in the proper court and then touches any part of the back or side stops including horizontal top rails, it may be played, so long as it has not hit the platform a second time on the same side of the net.

## 2. Only One Serve

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

## 3. Balls Bounced Over Back or Side Stops

Balls which are bounced over the wire or which hit an obstruction overhanging the court such as a tree or supporting bar across the corner are to be considered let balls and the point played over again.

## 4. Use of Balls in Tournaments

One ball only shall be used continuously during each set. Server may not substitute another ball during an unfinished set without the permission of the tournament officials, nor may server hold another ball when serving.

## 5. Number of Sets in Championship Matches

This is to be fixed for each tournament by the Association. (However, the usual practice is to play two out of three in all but the semifinals and finals of the national men's doubles, when it is three out of five.)

## 6. Foot Faults\*

The server shall throughout his delivery (moment of impact of paddle and ball) of his service:

A. Not change his position by walking or running. The server shall not by the following movements of his feet be deemed "to change his position by walking or running."

1. Slight movements of the feet which do not materially affect the location originally taken by him.

2. An unrestricted movement of one foot so long as the other foot maintains continuously its original contact with the platform. The moving foot cannot touch the baseline or touch inside the court before impact of paddle and ball.

3. Leaving the platform with both feet unless before the moment of impact of paddle and ball, either foot makes contact with the baseline or inside the court.

B. Not touch, with either foot, any area other than that behind the baseline within the imaginary extension of the center service line and the outer sideline.

## 7. Good Return† It is a good return:

(a) If the ball touches the net, posts, cord or metal cable, strap or band, provided that it passes over any of them and hits the ground within the court; or

\*As amended January 24, 1963.

†This is the USLTA ruling on what constitutes a "good return" and also applies to all APTA play. It is presented here for clarification purposes.

- (b) If the ball, served or returned, hits the ground 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 he nor any part of his clothes or racquet touch the net, posts, cord or metal cable, strap or band or the ground within his opponent's court, and that the stroke be otherwise good; or
- (c) If the ball be 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 hits ground within the proper court; or
- (d) If a player's racquet pass over the net after he has returned the ball, provided the ball pass the net before being played and be properly returned.

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Additional copies of this booklet are available by writing:  
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