

Competition Age Groups – Frequently Asked Questions

The questions and answers below will support a more detailed understanding of competition age group changes and how other areas of competition and British tennis will be affected by the changes.

How do I work out which age group I will be competing in?

The competition age group a player will compete in for the upcoming season will be determined by their age on the last date of that upcoming competition season. To find out which age groups you will be competing in from 1st September 2010 and beyond, go to the online competition age group calculator

Will all players be affected by changes to competition age groups?

Competition age group changes will only be applied to junior players aged 8 and under through to 18 and under. Adult and Veteran competition age groups will not be affected.

When will changes to competition age groups start?

Competition age group changes will come into affect for junior competitions from the 1st September 2010.

Will some players be staying in the same age group for another season when the competition age group changes go live on 1st September 2010?

There will be a high percentage of players who will stay in their current competition age group when the changes come into affect on 1st September 2010.

Those players who would have moved age groups on 1st September 2010 and are born between 1st April and the 31st August will remain in the same age group for another competition season.

Those players who would have moved age groups on 1st September 2010 and are born between 1st September and the 31st December will remain in the same age group for another two competition seasons.

Those players who would have moved age groups on 1st September 2010 and are born between 1st January and 31st March will still move age groups on 1st September 2010.

Why is the winter season 7 months long and the summer season 5 months long?

There is a difference in the length of the winter and summer competition seasons based on the structure of tennis in Great Britain. Due to the climate and recognised and established school and religious holiday periods, the winter season starts in September and runs to the end of March, the summer season starts in April and runs to the end of August. To find out more information on what will define the season that a competition falls in, please see question 18.

How do the changes to competition age groups affect Talent ID?

In the current competition structure players who are disadvantaged in competition because of their month of birth are to a large degree affected in the same way within the talent ID system – because players are being compared within the same year groups.

With the introduction of new competition age groups, the talent ID system will be more closely aligned to the winter and summer competition seasons. The current system of County, Regional and National Talent ID will continue, with sessions taking place towards the end of each season and with player nominations for Talent ID more closely reflecting the period of the year a player is born.

Will Schools Competition be affected by the competition age group changes?

No. The competition age group changes do not incorporate the Schools Tennis Competition programme. Schools Tennis Competition, along with all other school activity, is based on academic years, not age groups, and will continue on this basis for the foreseeable future. This is the simplest approach and reduces confusion for school children and teachers.

How will changes to competition age groups affect the AEGON British Tennis Ratings and Rankings systems?

Ratings system

Changes to competition age groups will not have an impact on the AEGON British Tennis Ratings system. There will still be 4 ratings runs per year. More information on the Ratings system is available at www.lta.org.uk

Rankings system

Currently when a player moves age groups on 1st September they retain their ranking points in the age category they are moving out of until 31st December of that year. The changes to competition age groups mean that players can move out of an age group on 1st September and 1st April each year. Once a player moves out of an age group they will no longer appear on the ranking list of the age group they have just moved out of.

Mini Tennis specific questions

Will there be flexibility for players to play up a ball colour under the new competition age group system?

Yes. Mini tennis players will be allowed to play up when in their final season of an age group/ball colour if they have reached a level 1 mini tennis rating. This will allow players to gain experience in the next ball colour/age group, whilst still competing in their correct ball colour/age group.

How will the flexibility of playing up work and affect mini tennis ratings?

8U Red Ball to 9U Orange Ball

When a player is in their **second to last and last season** of Red Ball competition and has reached a Red Level 1 mini tennis rating they will move to an Orange 4 mini tennis rating and can compete in Red and Orange Ball competitions.

In Orange Ball competition, any matches played and won against Orange players will count for their mini Orange rating in line with the with mini tennis ratings system. In Red Ball competition any matches and wins will not count towards their Orange rating. For their opponents, Red 1, 2, 3 and 4 rated players, any matches played will count as a 'participation' match and if relevant a 'win'.

If an orange player plays another orange player in a Red Ball competition the match will not count as a participation or win for either player. **9U Orange Ball to 10U**

Green Ball

When a player is in their last season of Orange Ball competition and has reached an Orange Level 1 mini tennis rating they will stay at an Orange Level 1 mini tennis rating and can compete in Orange and Green Ball competitions. At the end of that season, when they reach the appropriate age to compete in Green Ball competitions, they will move to a Green 2 Level rating.

In Orange and Green Ball competition, any matches played and won against Orange or Green players will not count for their rating as they have already reached Orange Level 1. For their Orange rated opponents results will count in line with the mini tennis ratings system. For their Green 1, 2, 3 and 4 rated opponents, any matches played will count as a 'participation' match but not as a 'win'.

10U Green Ball to 12U Yellow Ball

When a player is in their last season of Green Ball competition and has reached a Green Level 1 mini tennis rating they will stay at a Green Level 1 mini tennis rating and can compete in Green and 12U Yellow Ball competitions. At the end of the season, when they reach the appropriate age to compete in Yellow Ball competitions, they will move to a minimum of a 9.2 rating. This player will not pick up 12U ranking points when competing in 12U Yellow Ball competition.

In Green and Yellow Ball competition, any matches played and won against Green or Yellow players will not count for their rating as they have already reached Green Level 1. However, these results will be taken into account when assigning them a Yellow Ball rating of 9.2 or higher at the end of the season. For their Green rated opponents results will count in line with the mini tennis ratings system. For their opponents who are rated 10.2 or higher, any matches played will not count as a win or a loss.

Will there still be a Player Passport system in operation once the changes to competition age groups take place?

Player passports will still be awarded to those players achieving exceptional competition results and managed through the Talent Performance Teams.

8U Red player given a 9U Orange Ball Passport

This player will be given an Orange Level 2 rating and can compete in Red and Orange Ball competitions.

In Orange Ball competition, any matches played and won against Orange players will count for their mini Orange rating in line with the with mini tennis ratings system. In Red Ball competition any matches and wins will not count towards their Orange rating. For their opponents, Red 1, 2, 3 and 4 rated players, any matches played will count as a 'participation' match and if relevant a 'win'.

If an orange player plays another orange player in a Red Ball competition the match will not count as a participation or win for either player.

9U Orange player given a 10U Green Ball Passport

This player will be given a Green Level 2 rating and can enter and play in Orange and Green ball competitions.

In Green Ball competition, any matches played and won against Green players will count for their mini Green rating in line with the with mini tennis ratings. In Orange Ball competition any matches and wins will not count towards their Green rating. For their opponents, Orange 1, 2, 3 and 4 rated players, any matches played will count as a 'participation' match and if relevant a 'win'.

If a green player plays another green player in an Orange Ball competition the match will not count as a participation or win for either player.

10U Green player given a 12U Yellow Ball Passport

This player will keep a Green Level 1 mini tennis rating and can enter and play in Green and 12U Yellow Ball competitions.

When they reach the appropriate age to compete in Yellow Ball competitions, they will move to a minimum of a 9.2 rating. This player will not pick up 12U ranking points when competing in 12U Yellow Ball competition.

In Green and Yellow Ball competition, any matches played and won against Green or Yellow players will not count for their rating as they have already reached Green Level 1. However, these results will be taken into account when assigning them a Yellow Ball rating of 9.2 or higher at the end of the season. For their Green rated opponents, results will count in line with the mini tennis ratings system. For their opponents who are rated 10.2 or higher, any matches played will not count as a win or a loss.

Do other tennis countries and sports operate a similar competition age group system?

No. We will be the first country to put in place a system like this. However, a few other countries have put in place systems which takes into account the 'relative age effect,' making competition fairer for more players. When researching changes to competition age groups, we spoke with lots of other tennis countries and sports and all of them recognised that there are other ways to operate age groups to make competition fairer, regardless of your month of birth.

Coach Specific Questions

How will changes to competition age groups affect the structure of my coaching programme?

For players competing in Yellow Ball competition, from 12U, there should not be any significant changes to their coaching programme structure. For younger players competing in the mini tennis competition, coaches will be able to align a player's coaching programme around which competition season the player is competing in – winter or summer. As players move into their last season of a particular ball colour there will be the flexibility to compete up in the next ball colour up (see Question 10). This will allow coaches to structure part of the players training on the next ball colour, allowing the player some transition experience into this ball colour for the coming season.

In most coaching programmes the flexibility of the ball used will allow coaches the opportunity to group the better players together particularly for squad sessions, giving them some appropriate practice on the ball colour they will be competing in.

Competition Specific Questions

How will age groups work for those few competitions that run over two seasons?

For those few competitions, such as postal events, that start in one season and finish in another season, a player's eligibility to compete will be based on their age group on the start date of the competition.

What will determine the season a competition will be defined as being in?

The competition season will be determined by the end date of the competition. Those very few competitions that cross over two seasons will be looked at individually by the Competitions Team and assigned to a specific season.