

# Guidance for Tennis Players in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

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STEP 3 GUIDANCE



# COVID-19 SECURE 'PLAY SAFE' GUIDELINES - RETURN TO PLAY

These COVID-19 guidelines apply to England only (read guidelines for Scotland and Wales at [lta.org.uk/coronavirus](https://lta.org.uk/coronavirus)). They have been produced in line with the Government roadmap for the easing of lockdown restrictions, and specifically the guidance for [grassroots sports guidance for the public and sport providers](#) 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 (covering Step 3 from 17 May)
- Section 4: Provisional Tennis Activity Roadmap (Step 4)
- Section 5: 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.

## 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 a safe and naturally socially distant activity to take part in during the pandemic, whereby close person to person contact can be avoided.

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. These guidelines reflect the new restrictions set out in the Government's roadmap for easing lockdown, but the protocols and procedures included remain broadly the same as for previous restrictions.

As we move forward with the roadmap, 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 COVID-19 secure environments and in a way that helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They include measures to maintain hygiene and minimise unnecessary interactions with others.

Please be aware that venues and coaches will need to make an assessment based on their own individual circumstances as to how they can best operate safely, and so may put in place additional specific restrictions that are appropriate for their environment. Where they choose to do so please respect this.

Should you have any questions, you can refer to the [FAQs on the LTA website](#) and the [FAQs on the Sport England website](#).

We hope you enjoy getting on court!

## SUMMARY GRID

To accompany this document, we have also produced a simple summary grid that clearly outlines permitted tennis activity for each step of the roadmap in England, which can be viewed and downloaded via the link below:

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

## SECTION 1: BEFORE & AFTER PLAY

### STAY UP TO DATE

- Government information around coronavirus restrictions is available [here](#)
- Be aware guidance can change – ensure you have checked the latest update on the [LTA's dedicated coronavirus information page](#)
- **[UPDATED]** These guidelines cover activity under Step 3 of the Government roadmap – where guidelines and regulations apply only to Step 3 these come in to effect from 17 May 2021 (this is made clear where relevant) – although provisional dates for moving to future steps of the roadmap have been set, be aware these are subject to review and confirmation one week in advance

### 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](#), specifically:**
  - A high temperature
  - A new, continuous cough
  - A loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste
- If you have one or more of these symptoms or are 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. In any such instance, 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 yourself 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.

## BEFORE LEAVING HOME & AFTER YOU RETURN

- Download the NHS Covid-19 Test & Trace app so you can scan in at a venue should they have a QR code on display
- 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. While changing facilities are able to open, it is advised that their use be minimised, and not all venues will have them open.
- 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
- [UPDATED] There are different restrictions for play on outdoor and indoor courts – see Section 3 – Permitted Tennis Activity)
- The LTA's online booking platform, LTA Rally, has courts that can be booked in over 300 parks and clubs nationwide – visit [www.lta.org.uk/rally](http://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

- Travel 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
- [NEW] Car sharing is permitted in line with the [Government's safer travel guidance](#).
- For further information, [safer travel guidance is provided on the Government website](#)
- 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

- [UPDATED] Travel to and from Wales and Scotland is permitted (be aware there are different restrictions for playing tennis in Wales and Scotland).
- [UPDATED] You can now stay away from home overnight in accommodation including hotels, B&Bs, self-contained accommodation, and other people's homes, in groups of up to 6 people or two households.

## 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
- Where toilet and changing facilities are opened, particular care should be taken when using them. These are areas of increased risk and you should minimise time spent inside
- [UPDATED] If catering or takeaway facilities are open at the venue, respect social distancing and follow the guidance of the venue – outdoor catering is subject to maximum group size of 30, with indoor catering subject to the rule of 6 or two households.

## FACE COVERINGS

- [UPDATED] When accessing indoor facilities (including as a throughway to access outdoor courts), visitors are encouraged to wear masks in enclosed indoor public areas when not engaging in sport and physical activity and where this is possible and practical

## SOCIAL CONTACT LIMITS

- [UPDATED] Players should be aware that while there are exemptions in place to permit organised outdoor and indoor group tennis activity in numbers greater than the permitted social contact limits, this exemption only applies to the organised physical activity itself and not any socialising before, after or around the activity
- Participants should therefore ensure they adhere to the rule of six indoors and 30 outdoors before the activity starts and after it ends, and during any breaks in play

## 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, 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
- 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 and clean your hands before play and immediately after finishing (use alcohol gel if required)
- If you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve
- Avoid touching your face
- See the Government's advice on the [basics of good hygiene](#) for more info

### EQUIPMENT & FACILITIES

- There is no requirement for players to use their own individual tennis balls (this was an initial precautionary measure put in place at the start of the pandemic and is no longer a recommended measure, in line with the latest [research](#)). It is recommended that the focus be put on other preventative measures such as maintaining hand hygiene.
- 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 made a personal decision to use their own marked tennis balls
- Avoid using other equipment such as courtside benches, net handles or court sweepers where possible

### SUPERVISION & SPECTATING

- **[UPDATED]** Spectators are permitted to view events on both public and private land in Step 3, but need to adhere to social distancing rules. Spectators need to adhere to social gathering limits (groups of 30 outdoors and six people/two households indoors).
- **[NEW]** Spectators are allowed indoors, but the total number of all participants, coaches, officials and spectators must be aligned with the ventilation rates permitted by the particular venue.

## SECTION 3: PERMITTED TENNIS ACTIVITY

This section details permitted tennis activity from 17 May 2021 under Step 3 of the Government's roadmap for the easing of lockdown restrictions in England.

Further detail on provisional permitted activity under Steps 4 of the roadmap is provided in Section 4 of this document. An overview of this information is also provided in our summary grid:

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

### STEP 3: FROM 17 MAY

#### 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 30 people by law.**
- People should not go to a tennis venue socially in groups of more than 30
- Social distancing should be maintained between people who do not live together or share a support bubble
- For padel, doubles play is 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](#) provided that venues, coaching providers and event organisers follow LTA COVID-19 secure guidelines
- In order to be able to deliver activity for larger groups the organiser will have conducted a risk assessment and have taken reasonable steps to limit transmission of the coronavirus and deliver the activity for you safely
- **Organised group activity is defined as being activity formally organised by a national governing body, club, qualified instructor/coach, club, business or charity and follows the LTA's sport-specific guidance for tennis**
- If the sport is not organised by one of these groups (for example, some friends getting together to play) or the LTA's guidance is not being followed (for example, no risk assessment has been done or recommended measures being ignored), this is considered by the Government to be informal or self-

organised sport and so it is not exempt from the legal outdoor gathering limit of 30.

- [UPDATED] For adults and children, the venue/coach will decide the safe and appropriate group size limit depending on their environment and risk assessment for that activity, but the LTA advises activity should be in line with [recommended coach to player ratios](#). Group coaching for children can now take part in any number, subject to a risk assessment for the specific venue.
- Participants should adhere to social distancing with those from another household when not actively participating
- The exemption to permit large group numbers for sport only applies to the activity itself. Social interaction among group participants before and after any group tennis activity outdoors should only take place in separate and distinct groups consisting of up to 30 people in line with the social contact limits, while maintaining social distancing at all times
- If an organiser is not able to ensure this (including when arriving at or leaving activity or socialising) then such events should not take place. **Failure to adhere to this could result in the exemption for larger numbers for group sport being removed.**
- Attendees should 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, 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
- Draw sizes will be determined by the event organisers in line with their risk assessment and event delivery plan as per what is safe and appropriate for the event and 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 30 people.

## INDOOR TENNIS

### INFORMAL SOCIAL PLAY

- [UPDATED] Permitted from 17 May for up to six players from different households, or two households.
- 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
- People should not go to an indoor tennis facility socially in groups of more than 6 people.

### 1:1 COACHING

- Permitted in line with the LTA's Covid-19 Secure guidance for coaching activity

### ORGANISED GROUP ACTIVITY

- [NEW] Permitted for adults and children, and does not need to comply with the rule of six, if formally organised by a qualified instructor, club, national

governing body, company or charity and follow LTA Covid-19 Secure guidance, including having a risk assessment and activity action plan in place

- [NEW] **For adults and children**, the venue/coach will decide the safe and appropriate group size limit depending on their environment and risk assessment for that activity, but the LTA advises activity should be in line with [recommended coach to player ratios](#). Group coaching for children can now take part in any number, subject to a risk assessment for the specific venue. The maximum occupancy of each indoor facility should be limited by providing a minimum of 100 sqft per person, in line with Government guidance.
- **Organised group activity is defined as being activity formally organised by a national governing body, club, qualified instructor/coach, club, business or charity and follows the LTA's sport-specific guidance for tennis**
- If the sport is not organised by one of these groups (for example, some friends getting together to play) or the LTA's guidance is not being followed (for example, no risk assessment has been done or recommended measures being ignored), this is considered by the Government to be informal or self-organised sport and so it is not exempt from the legal indoor gathering limit of 6.
- The exemption to permit larger group numbers for sport only applies to the activity itself. Social interaction among group participants before and after any group tennis activity indoors should only take place in separate and distinct groups consisting of up to 6 people or two households, in line with the social contact limits, while maintaining social distancing at all times

## **COMPETITIONS**

- [NEW] Permitted for adults and children.
- Draw size and participant numbers will be dependent on the capacity restrictions on indoor facilities.

## SECTION 4: PROVISIONAL TENNIS ACTIVITY ROADMAP

### STEP 4

- The Government's roadmap is based on four steps. We have summarised below the key relevant aspects of the easing of restrictions for each future step, outlining what is known to date
- Before taking each step, the Government will review the latest data on the impact of the previous step against four tests around vaccination deployment and impact, infection rates and NHS hospitalisations, and status of any new variants of the disease. They will then announce one week in advance whether restrictions will be eased as planned.
- Our summary grid provides a provisional overview of what each of the steps mean for tennis activity. The grid and this section of this document will be updated with further detail ahead of moving to the next step of the roadmap
- Where children's sport is referred to, this relates to activity for people aged under 18 on 31 August 2020. Adult sport refers to activity for anyone aged 18 or over on 31 August 2020

### STEP 4: No earlier than 21 June

- Removal of limits on social contact
- Enable large events above Step 3 capacity restrictions, subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research programme, and potentially using testing to reduce the risk of infection, subject to further evaluation

## SECTION 5: 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.

Further, detailed information on providing disability tennis activity during the coronavirus pandemic is available in our dedicated guidance document for Open Court venues.

### WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

- A player/coach using a tennis wheelchair for activity should ideally:
  - Be able to transfer yourself from your day chair into a tennis wheelchair
  - Have support from a person from your household or bubble that can transfer you 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
- While social distancing should be maintained where possible, in some circumstances people will need physical assistance from someone outside their household/bubble to be active. It's important players discuss this with the provider so they can consider your needs and preferences
- 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

### VISUALLY IMPAIRED 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 your 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 indoors and 30 outdoors still applies.