

# Guidance for Tennis Coaches in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

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STEP 3 GUIDANCE



**TENNIS**  
FOR BRITAIN

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

These COVID-19 guidelines apply to England only. 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](#), guidance for [providers of grassroots sport and sport facilities](#), guidance for [organised sports events](#) and 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:

- Introduction
- Section 1: General Guidelines
- Section 2: Permitted Tennis Activity (covering Step 3 from 17 May)
- Section 3: Provisional Tennis Activity Roadmap (Step 4)
- Section 4: Additional Guidelines for Disability Tennis
- Section 5: Coaching Activity in Schools

Alongside these guidelines, venues should read any updated information published by [Sport England](#).

Guidelines for playing tennis in Scotland and Wales can be read at [lta.org.uk/coronavirus](https://lta.org.uk/coronavirus).

Please note, this guidance is for non-professional tennis – elite tennis is subject to separate and additional strict protocols, and can continue in line with those indoors and outdoors.

## 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](#)

## INTRODUCTION

We know tennis coaches are keen to offer a full range of sessions for customers in a safe and appropriate manner and in line with Government restrictions. 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.

Coaches and coaching providers across the country are all different and operate in different local contexts. Making an assessment of whether a safe exercise environment can be provided depends on a range of factors, which apply differently at each venue. It is the responsibility of each tennis provider, coach and facility to make that assessment based on their local environment.

These guidelines complement the guidelines for players, venues, and officials/competition organisers, and all elements of the guidelines should be considered to ensure activity can be delivered safely.

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](#).

## SECTION 1: GENERAL GUIDELINES

### GENERAL GUIDANCE

- All activity should be consistent with the government guidance regarding health, travel, social distancing and hygiene at all times
- Coaches and coaching organisations must consider safety first, particularly minimising the risk of infection/transmission (see 'Risk Assessments' section below), and follow specific processes for running larger group activity (see 'Activity Action Plans' section below)
- Coaches who have had their normal activity disrupted and have a need to coach outside of their normal venue, should seek prior permission from the venue, local authority or operator who is in charge of the tennis facility, before undertaking coaching
- **[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
- Guidelines will be updated as we progress through the different phases of Government measures – the LTA remains in discussions with Government and so we recommend you check the official LTA position at [www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus) on a regular basis to stay abreast of the latest information
- Any measures coaches put in place to enable tennis activity to resume should be capable of being flexed or changed quickly should restrictions change
- The guidance set out for coaches covers all tennis venues that follow COVID-19 secure guidance. Coaches should continue to work closely with the venues at which they are delivering activity, to ensure that all activity is COVID-19 secure

### RISK ASSESSMENTS

- A thorough risk assessment should be undertaken by venues (or updated if one previously done), and appropriate measures put in place to mitigate against risk and ensure participants, staff and volunteers are protected – coaches are advised to liaise with your venue on this
- Risk assessments should be completed in line with [guidance from the Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#)
- A risk assessment template is available from the COVID-19 section of the venue [Resource Library](#) on the LTA website

### ACTIVITY ACTION PLANS

- Where a venue or coach wishes to utilise exemptions that permit formally organised activity to take place in larger numbers than would otherwise be possible under the social contact limits (such as coached sessions, club nights and competitions), providers should use their risk assessment to develop an action plan for safe participation, to be distributed to all relevant personnel, including coaches and welfare officers
- The action plan should set out the transmission risk of the relevant activity, and demonstrate mitigations, plans to operate, and any adaptations required. It should also consider how compliance with infection control measures will

be achieved, and where relevant set out how information to support NHS Test and Trace will be collected

- **[NEW]** For indoor tennis facilities, consideration should also be given to the Government's capacity restrictions for indoor facilities, which should be limited by providing a minimum of 100 sq ft per person.
- A template event delivery plan that can be used by venues organising club nights can be downloaded from the [LTA's Venue Resource Library](#)

## PRE-ATTENDANCE SYMPTOM CHECK

- All coaches and participants in your sessions should undergo a pre-attendance self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms [using the information on the NHS website](#) before leaving home, and this should be clearly communicated to attendees in advance
- No-one should leave home to participate in tennis if they, or someone they live with, has symptoms of COVID -19, currently recognised as any of:
  - A high temperature
  - A new, continuous cough
  - A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste
- Should an individual have demonstrated any such symptoms, they must follow [NHS and PHE guidance on self-isolation](#) and follow the steps for [Test and Trace](#)

## NHS TEST & TRACE

- If a player you have coached develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should be directed to follow the Government's 'test and trace' guidelines, which can be read on the [Gov.uk](#) website
- Please note, it is down to NHS Test and Trace to make decisions on close contacts. However, it is our understanding that if coaches ensure they and those taking part in their tennis activity adhere to the LTA Covid-19 Secure guidelines and maintain social distancing at all times, then it would not be anticipated that they would be classified as a close contact of a participant user who subsequently tests positive

## TENNIS ACTIVITY

- **[UPDATED]** Permitted tennis activity under Step 3 of the roadmap from 17 May is outlined in Section 2 of this document, with what is allowed and group numbers varying depending on if the activity is informal social play or organised group activity
- You can meet with different clients/groups in a single day
- A summary of permitted tennis activity is provided in the [LTA's summary grid](#)

## TRAVEL

- Travel to take part in recreational tennis activity is permitted
- **[NEW]** Car sharing is permitted in line with the [Government's safer travel guidance](#).
- **[UPDATED]** Travel to and from Wales and Scotland is permitted (be aware there are different restrictions for playing tennis in Wales and Scotland).
- **[UPDATED]** Overnight stays away from home are now permitted in accommodation including hotels, B&Bs, self-contained accommodation, and other people's homes, in groups of up to 6 people or two households.
- Further information is provided in the Government guidance for [safer travel](#)

## MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Social distancing between players, and between the coach and players should be maintained at all times – the latest Government advice on social distancing can be read [here](#)
- Coaches should ensure this is emphasised to participants in advance and at the start of each session, and that they are clear on how they should maintain social distancing for each drill before starting it
- Larger group sessions may need to utilise multiple full-size courts in order to maintain social distancing, depending on the local environment and risk assessment. Where space and number of courts available is limited, then based on your risk assessment only smaller group sessions may be possible. Coaches should refer to the [LTA's recommended coach:player ratios](#) for more specific guidance
- Adaptations to drills and how you provide feedback/instruction may be needed to ensure social distancing guidelines can be safely adhered to
- Coaches should encourage players to avoid running down balls within an exercise if it could compromise social distancing
- Coaches should encourage players not to congregate on or around the court before and after play, or during breaks in the session
- The exemption to permit larger group numbers for sport only applies to the activity itself, and so participants should be advised that any social interaction before or after the session is in line with social contact restrictions (indoors for Step 3 this is the 'rule of six', outdoors groups of 30)
- Attendees should be advised to limit their interactions with anyone outside of the group they are attending the venue with (e.g. players on another court or in a different coaching group), and they should continue to maintain social distancing from those that they do not live with or are in a support bubble with

## GROUP SESSIONS FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN (UPDATED)

- **[UPDATED]** The maximum number of people permitted in a formally organised group activity for adults (such as club nights or coached sessions) should be determined by the coach/venue, in accordance with your risk assessment and activity action plan. The [LTA's recommended coach to player ratios should also be considered](#).
- **[NEW]** The previous guidance for children to be limited to groups of no more than 15 no longer applies, and children will be able to take part in any number. However, when considering appropriate group sizes, it remains important to take into account recommended occupancy levels of a venue, and levels of ventilation.
- **[NEW]** For indoor facilities, the Government's position is that the maximum occupancy of an indoor facility should be limited by providing a minimum of 100sqft per person.
- Depending on your risk assessment, programmes that might ordinarily be delivered in larger groups such as Cardio Tennis, may need some adaptations to ensure social distancing can be maintained, depending on considerations around venue and other general guidance
- See Section 2 of this document for more details on organised group activity

## COACHING CHILDREN (UPDATED)

- The LTA has provided guidance as to how adaptations to LTA Youth Start drills can be made to maintain social distancing in the [LTA's coach secure area](#)



- Red court specific guidance: Consider using a safe barrier between red courts (e.g. line of cones, strips or barrier tape) and use spots/ground markers to facilitate children maintaining social distancing as part of the session organisation
- If you feel your youngest groups would be unable to reasonably maintain social distancing, consider a) prioritising sessions with older children first for commencement, b) reducing number of red courts per full sized adult court, c) adding an assistant to help organisation or d) reducing number of participants in a group

## HEALTH, SAFETY & HYGIENE

- Ensure usual access to first aid and emergency equipment is maintained
- Injuries should still be treated, as participant safety is of the utmost importance – further details are provided in the LTA's guidance for venues
- Further information for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting is available on the [Government website](#)
- Additional guidance on delivering first aid during the coronavirus pandemic is also available on the [St John Ambulance website](#)
- Hand hygiene is imperative - hand sanitise at intervals if you have to touch communal surfaces
- Avoid touching your face
- If you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve
- The same recommended hygiene measures also apply to players, and coaches are advised to remind them of these in your communications before and at sessions
- See the Government's advice on the [basics of good hygiene](#) for more info

## EQUIPMENT

- Coaches do not need to use new or fresh tennis balls for each lesson, and are no longer advised to be the only person to touch the tennis balls. Players also do not need to use their own individual tennis balls (these were initial precautionary measures put in place at the start of the pandemic and are no longer recommended measures, in line with the latest [research](#)). It is recommended that the focus be put on other preventative measures such as maintaining hand hygiene.
- Coaches and players should still take care to avoid touching your faces during play, and you should all clean your hands before the session and immediately after finishing (use alcohol gel if required)
- Players should still bring their own equipment where possible and sharing of equipment should be limited – however, use of communal rackets can be done subject to thorough cleaning processes between uses
- Any coaching equipment used (e.g. cones) should be wiped down and cleaned rigorously afterwards
- Ensure all equipment is removed from the court at the end of the session
- Water bottles or other refreshment containers should not be shared under any circumstances

## BOOKINGS & PAYMENT

- Operate online booking for coaching sessions where at all possible, or alternatively phone bookings
- Take any payments online, and avoid handling cash

- There is no need to have a buffer period between session booking slots, but coaches should still consider what appropriate measures can be implemented to allow participants to enter and leave the courts safely
- Depending on the set up of the venue, this may still involve leaving a small gap between sessions or finishing sessions slightly early to allow time for players to leave before the next players arrive, or alternatively having different entry and exit gates or marked out socially distant waiting areas – **this is particularly the case for session that involve larger groups**, and should be covered in your risk assessment and activity action plan

## VENUE LIAISON

- Coaches should liaise with the venue to ensure an agreed approach to activity that is feasible to deliver safely, and explore how coaches can be supported to deliver sessions

## VENUE FACILITIES

- **[UPDATED]** Indoor facilities are permitted to open for public use including indoor courts, toilet and changing facilities (see below), access floodlights or access equipment (safety measures and clear signage should be in place)
- Clubhouses and pavilions may be re-opened, subject to an updated risk assessment

## CHANGING ROOMS, TOILETS & SHOWERS

- Toilets can be accessed
- **[UPDATED]** Changing rooms and showers can open for use by the public but their use should be minimised (in particular however, access should be made available for people with disabilities or special needs). Attendees should continue to be asked to arrive changed and to shower at home where possible

## COMMUNICATION

- Coaches should make customers aware in advance that undertaking any activity, including tennis, has the potential for increased risk of transmission of COVID-19, and advise attendees to read the [Government's guidance on how to stop the spread of coronavirus](#)
- Communicate with your customers clearly and regularly, making them aware in advance of the measures you are putting in place for your sessions, and guidelines they should follow when attending
- Ensure participants know ahead in advance which coach & court to report to

## 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 2: 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 Step 4 of the roadmap is provided in Section 3 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 all cases the organiser must conduct a risk assessment and complete an activity action plan (see Section 1), and take all reasonable steps to limit transmission of the coronavirus by reference to that risk assessment and all relevant LTA COVID-19 Secure 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 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
- Organised events such as open days are permitted (see venue guidance).

## 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 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 risk assessment and safe capacity restrictions on indoor facilities.

## SECTION 3: PROVISIONAL TENNIS ACTIVITY ROADMAP

### STEP 4

- The Government's roadmap is based on four steps. To assist tennis coaches, venues, and officials in preparations, 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 4: DISABILITY TENNIS

To support the resumption of the LTA's Open Court disability tennis programme, we have produced additional tennis specific guidance for coaches running 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.

### COACHING DISABILITY TENNIS

- Although activity levels were at a record high prior to COVID-19, participation of disabled people in sport has been greatly impacted by coronavirus – venues hosting inclusive and disability-specific tennis activity is therefore particularly encouraged
- Be aware that disabled people as a group have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, and so there may be increased concern and anxiety about returning to play. Venues should consider speaking to disabled players yet to return and finding out how people are, as well as discuss what their intention is for returning to tennis
- Prior to the most recent lockdown, LTA survey data showed that while an increasing number of disabled people were returning to the court and were excited and happy to return to tennis, a large proportion said they were playing less than they have been in the past. Nearly half felt uncertain or negative around their own safety and anxious about returning
- Coaches should ensure details of how they will run sessions are updated and clear for disabled people, and involve them in the solutions to ensure the session is COVID safe, for everyone
- **Communication is crucial, and coaches should continue to promote the hygiene and coronavirus safety measures you have in place to help reassure disabled players about their return**

### 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 by a nominated member of staff, using appropriate PPE
- A person accessing a sports wheelchair owned by the venue should only use the tennis wheelchair that has been assigned to them, no swapping of wheelchairs mid-session should be allowed

**VISUALLY IMPAIRED TENNIS**

- If verbal guiding is not appropriate, and the player doesn't have appropriate support from someone from their household/bubble, then guiding people with sight loss for coached sessions can take place as long as both the guide and visually impaired player follow the mitigations outlined below:
  - Both people to wash hands / sanitise immediately before and 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



## SECTION 5: ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS

Pupils in all year groups have returned to school full time, and this includes the resumption of school sport and after-school clubs.

The [Department for Education has published guidance](#) to support the resumption of physical activity in schools, and coaches, teachers and venues should be aware of the following points:

- Each school has the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided
- Pupils should be kept in consistent groups, with equipment cleaned between use by individual groups
- Outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not
- External facilities can be used
- Competition between different schools should not take place until wider grassroots sport for under 18s is permitted
- Schools can work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extra-curricular activities, but must be satisfied that it is safe to do so

As the DfE does, the LTA encourages schools to refer to advice from [the Association for Physical Education](#) (afPE) and [the Youth Sport Trust](#).

### LTA YOUTH SCHOOLS TEACHER TRAINING

- LTA Youth Schools teacher training courses are available again and can be booked at [www.lta.org.uk/schools](http://www.lta.org.uk/schools)
- Access to all the digital resources from this new programme also remain freely available to schools via: [www.lta.org.uk/schools](http://www.lta.org.uk/schools) and to coaches via the Coach Secure Area

### COACH COMMUNICATION TO SCHOOLS

- Given the above, the LTA advises that proactive communication and approaches to schools can take place
- However, whilst the relaxation of restrictions is hugely positive for PE and school sport, communication and approaches from tennis coaches to schools should be made empathetically, understanding the wider and significant ongoing challenges school leaders will be facing