Guidance for Officials & Competition Organisers in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO COMPETITION

Version 3 – Published 2 December 2020

(Including guidance for tiers of local restrictions)
COVID-19 SECURE GUIDELINES - RETURN TO COMPETITION

These COVID-19 guidelines apply to England only (read guidelines for Scotland here, and for Wales here). They have been produced in line with Government announcements following the initial easing of lockdown and recent implementation of regional tiered restrictions, and the subsequent Government guidance for grassroots sports guidance for the public and sport providers, the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation and 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:

- Section 1: Preparation & Facilities
- Section 2: Competition Organisation
- Section 3: Competition Activity (by Tier)
- Section 4: 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.

LOCAL RESTRICTIONS

This document now covers guidelines for tennis activity across all tiers of the different tiers of local restrictions that were introduced by the Government from 2 December. A summary of the three tiers can be viewed on the LTA website, and you can see which areas of the country fall under which tier on the Government website or via the postcode checker.

- VIEW SUMMARY GRID: Tennis Activity By Tier

INTRODUCTION

We know Officials & Competition Organisers will be keen to provide competitive opportunities in a safe and appropriate manner and in line with Government restrictions. By its very nature, tennis is an activity whereby close person to person contact can be avoided, with the Government saying tennis is a good example of an activity that can be undertaken in a way compliant with social distancing restrictions.

Based on our continued discussions with Government, the LTA has developed this updated set of practical guidelines for venues to follow so that tennis can be played in England, where the local environment allows.

We 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 a way that is in line with Government advice and helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They include measures to maintain hygiene and minimise unnecessary interactions with others.
As lockdown restrictions evolve, the LTA’s guidance, in line with Government legislation and guidance, will focus on ensuring that venues and coaches can provide COVID-19 secure environments, recognising the different operating contexts that organisations face.

Tennis venues across the country are all different and operate in different local contexts. Making an assessment of whether a safe competition environment can be provided depends on a range of factors, which apply differently at each venue. It is the responsibility of each official & competition organiser and tennis facility to make that assessment based on their local environment.

These guidelines complement guidelines for venues, coaches and players, 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: PREPARATION & FACILITIES

VENUE MANAGEMENT

- Ensure your club committee/venue management team oversees and maintains the implementation of measures in relation to staging of competitions, and any updates to them. All activity should be consistent with the government guidance regarding health, travel, social distancing and hygiene at all times.

- **IMPORTANT:** Venues must consider safety first, particularly minimising the risk of infection/transmission. A thorough risk assessment should be undertaken (or updated if one previously done) ahead of staging a competition, as well as an event delivery plan in line with the Government’s guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity participation events. This should ensure appropriate measures are put in place to ensure participants, staff and volunteers are protected, and to minimise risk. Risk assessment and event delivery plan templates are available from the COVID-19 section of the venue Resource Library on the LTA website.

- Guidelines will be updated as Government measures change - 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 recommendations.

- Any measures venues put in place to enable tennis activity to resume need to be capable of being flexed or changed quickly if tighter social distancing is reintroduced in the future or when the restrictions are further relaxed – be aware that if restrictions are tightened at a national or local level, this may prevent scheduled competitions from being held.

COURTS

- Outdoor courts can be used for competitions across all tiers, with some restrictions on the use of indoor courts – the guidance in this document covers both instances, but please note the use of indoor courts is subject to additional restrictions, as outlined in Section 3 of these guidelines below.

- Ensure nets are maintained at the appropriate height to avoid players having to adjust them, and remove net winders.

- If your courts require dragging (e.g. clay) or drying after rain, venues are advised to have a nominated person to do this or make disposable gloves and spray available for players to use.

- Remove any other unnecessary equipment and items from courts, and ensure appropriate cleaning measures are in place. Equipment such as benches may be kept in place to provide support to participants, but regular and appropriate cleaning must be undertaken.

VENUE FACILITIES

- Clubhouses and pavilions can be opened for the public across tiers to access outdoor courts or use toilet facilities, and where possible in line with wider tiered restrictions, serve food and drink.

- Where toilet facilities are opened, particular care should be taken by those using them and those cleaning them. Where they are open, ensure soap and water is provided.

- Indoor facilities such changing rooms (other than toilets) and gyms can be opened (subject to specific guidelines), but use of changing facilities and...
showers should be avoided where possible, with participants asked to arrive ready to play and to shower at home.

- Venues providing such indoor access should consider ensuring clear signage is in place so people can find their destination quickly, putting in place queue management or one-way flow measures, and limiting the number of customers in the building, overall and in any particular congestion areas – **particular emphasis should be put on clear signage for the staging of competitions in instances where participants and other visitors to the venue may not know their way around as well as regular users**
- Further guidance for the reopening of clubhouses and pavilions is provided on the Government website.

**SOCIAL DISTANCING**

- In line with the Government’s guidance, the event timetable should be designed to permit only as many people as can be admitted whilst social distancing is maintained at the event at any given time. Event areas must be designed in order to maximise the available space for each participant and minimise the amount of time participants spend in proximity to each other.
- Ensure measures are in place to minimise encounters between people, including in car parks and at entrances.
- Consider marking two metre distances at appropriate points, such as the entry gates to courts, referee desk and areas for the parents.

**HEALTH, SAFETY & HYGIENE**

- Ensure usual access to first aid and emergency equipment is maintained.
- Guidance on delivering first aid during the coronavirus pandemic is available on the [St John Ambulance website](https://www.stjohn.org.uk).
- Further information for those who may need to act as a ‘first responder’ role in a sports setting is available on the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk).
- Make hand sanitizers or wipes available for use at entrance/exit to venue/courts and buildings where possible (Hand sanitizer stations can be sourced from the LTA Buying Group - see [https://www.ltabluyinggroup.co.uk](https://www.ltabluyinggroup.co.uk)).
- Clean all common touchpoint surfaces (gates, door handles, handrails etc) regularly, wearing disposable gloves - attendees should be advised to clean their hands with hand sanitiser after touching shared surfaces such as gates.
- Where safe and appropriate, doors and court gates could be left open during the competition.
- Further guidance on maintaining hygiene at your venue is available on the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk).

**ENTRIES**

- Operate online entry for all competitions including recreational competitions to ensure you do not exceed the capacity at your venue, and also make it easy to record attendee details.
- Take any payments online, and avoid handling cash.
- Online bookings can be facilitated through the LTA Competition Management System or ClubSpark Events Module (Recreational Competitions only).
SECTION 2: COMPETITION ORGANISATION

PRE-ATTENDANCE SYMPTOM CHECK
- Anyone attending a competition in any capacity should undergo a pre-attendance self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms using the information on the NHS website before leaving home. 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 the following:
  - 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
- Anyone required to self-isolate for any other reason should also not exercise outside their own home or garden and should not exercise with others. This includes if they have been asked to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because they are a close contact of a known COVID-19 case, or if they have returned from a travel destination not included on the Government’s travel corridor list. In all of these instances, they should not leave their home to take part in a tennis competition

NHS TEST & TRACE
- If someone who has played in your competition 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
- To support NHS Test and Trace, officials and competition organisers should keep a temporary record of all those on site for the competition for 21 days, in a way that is manageable, and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed

TRAVELLING TO AND FROM COMPETITIONS
- Guidance on travel for tennis activity varies depending on the tier of local restrictions – refer to the summary grid for details of what guidelines are in place for each tier and the LTA Player guidance for more details
- Participants can help control COVID-19 and travel safely by walking and cycling, if they can, or driving - safer travel guidance is provided on the Government website
- For participants in tier 3 areas, the Government advises not to travel into or out of tier 3 areas, including for playing tennis. Travel is permitted where it is necessary to enable sport for disabled people, sport for educational purposes, or supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s, to take place, but should still be minimised
- For tier 3 areas: travel is permitted into or out of the area for work or education purposes (e.g. coaches, elite athletes, officials)

COMPETITION ACTIVITY
- IMPORTANT: Permitted competition activity varies by tier (see Section 3 below).
- While outdoor informal social play group size is limited to a maximum of six people by law, the government has confirmed that organised outdoor sport
is exempt from legal gathering limits across all tiers. This is provided the activity is in accordance with the COVID-19 Secure guidelines published by the LTA and Government. This includes organised tennis competitions for larger groups, subject to a thorough risk assessment and event delivery plan, taking into consideration the relevant LTA and Government guidance, and ensuring clear and appropriate risk mitigation measures are in place. Government has published detailed guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity participation events.

- Whilst organised indoor sport is not exempt from legal gathering limits, organised indoor competition at COVID-19 secure venues can continue to take place for larger draw numbers, as long as activity on court for individual matches is in line with general guidance on tennis activity (see Section 3 below). Off-court, individuals should limit their social interaction with others in line with wider restrictions in that tier.
- Competition draw size may need to be limited depending on a range of factors including the COVID-19 secure capacity of the venue
- We recommend that competition organisers very carefully consider the maximum capacity that they can operate at safely and whilst ensuring social distancing can be maintained at all times. This will vary across venues, and so competition organisers should produce detailed risk assessments and event delivery plans taking into account these factors
- Any individual groups should not interact with anyone outside of the group they are attending the venue with (e.g. players on another court)
- All groups are to be self-sufficient i.e. an official or competition organiser should not oversee two separate competition groups at a time, unless a court supervisor is appointed to each group and the referee minimises interactions as far as possible

COMPETITIONS FOR UNDER-18S
- All supervised activity for children (including outside school) is exempt from legal gathering limits, and can happen in any number across all tiers, both indoors and outdoors. This includes tennis competitions.
- IMPORTANT: In a change from the pre-lockdown guidance, this now includes young people who were 17 at the start of the academic year, even if they turn 18 during the remainder of that academic year

SCHEDULING ADVICE FOR ONE DAY EVENTS/MATCHPLAYS
- To minimise waiting time for players on site, a competition should ideally be organised so that the schedule is 1 round on, 1 round off i.e. for 4 courts you should accept a maximum of 16 players
- Consider only running 1 or 2 events per day based on the number of courts available
- Draw formats could be matchplay draws, round robins, compass draws or knock out with consolations.
- You can run singles and doubles events
- Carefully plan the schedule so you know how many people will be at the your competition and do not exceed the allowed size of a competition
- We suggest either Two Sets + MTB or Two FAST4 sets + MTB as the scoring format
- Consider the other needs of the club members and venue coaches – shorter days mean members and coaches can use the courts after matches have been completed or the venue may want to only provide so many courts leaving some for members or coaches
In the event of a prolonged rain relay, officials and competition organisers are encouraged to make an early decision on

**RAIN DELAYS**
- In the event of rain, attendees should use an umbrella or if they drove, return to their own vehicle, to maintain social distancing if there is insufficient outdoor cover from the rain to maintain social distancing.
- **Attendees should not gather indoors to shelter**
- In the event of an extended delay, officials and competition organisers are encouraged to make an early decision with regards to cancelling the competition to avoid attendees waiting around for a prolonged period

**MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCING**
- Social distancing should be observed by all those attending the competition. Officials and competition organisers should be fully aware of the latest Government advice on staying alert and safe (social distancing), which can be read [here](#).
- Participants should be advised to limit their interactions with anyone outside of those they are competing (e.g. players on other courts)
- Encourage players not to congregate on/around the court before & after play
- There should be no skin to skin contact for players. Racket taps are allowed but shaking hands or elbow alternatives are not permitted
- A socially distanced presentation can take place but Medals/Trophies should remain in boxes/packaging or players can take them out the boxes and be collected from the table (not passed). This should only be held outdoors

**SUPERVISION & SPECTATING**

**OUTDOORS**
- Where attendance of a parent/guardian (non-participant) is required, or a carer for a disabled player, it is permitted across all tiers, but should be off court and ideally be limited to one per player where possible
- Rules for legal gathering limits vary by tier, but supporters, parents, and other spectators must adhere to legal gathering limits whilst attending events
- **It is important that spectators adhere to these limits; in addition to being legal requirements punishable by fines, those violating the measures are endangering public safety and undermining the case for safe sport to be allowed to take place**
- If spectators do not follow these legal requirements, the club or provider can ask them to leave or not to attend again. Where there are serious or consistent issues with spectators, the sport’s national governing body may consider sanctions including suspending the relevant sport provider from running any leagues, matches, training sessions or other events or activities until this has been addressed
- There is an additional risk of infection where people are shouting or singing in close proximity to others (particularly indoors and when face-to-face). Spectators should minimise shouting or raising their voices

**INDOORS**
All of the above guidance in place for outdoor competition also applies to indoor competition, but there is also some further additional guidance that applies for indoor competition:

- The guidance to avoid or minimise attendance by spectators and non-participating children is especially the case within indoor facilities.
- Consider controlling spectator numbers through pre-booking or other controls at access points.
- Only parents/guardians watching a player on court at that time should be in the viewing area/balcony – others may wait in another appropriate designated area in a socially distant manner, or in their car.

### Equipment

- Players are advised to bring and use their own equipment – where any equipment is shared it should be subject to thorough cleaning measures between use.
- Any equipment used (e.g. mini tennis nets, orange lines, scoreboards) should be cleaned and wiped down afterwards.
- New or fresh tennis balls are not needed for each match, but extra care must be taken to ensure the players do not touch their faces during play, and anyone involved in the match should all clean their hands before the match and immediately after finishing (use alcohol gel if required).

### Communication

- Communicate with your players/parents clearly and regularly, making them aware in advance of the measures you are putting in place at your competition, and guidelines they are asked to follow.
- Make participants aware that undertaking any activity, including tennis, has the potential for increased risk of transmission of COVID-19, and advise attendees to read [Government guidance on staying safe outside your home](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/staying-safe-outside-your-home).
- Ensure a fact sheet is provided and/or ensure your emails highlight all guidance to players/parents.
- Encourage attendees to bring their own hand sanitiser. Participants should be discouraged from bringing any equipment, baggage or clothing that is not essential for their participation.
- Ensure signage on guidelines for maintaining social distancing and promoting hygiene measures is clearly displayed (and ensure these remain up to date as restrictions change).
- Where possible, player/parent briefings should be provided in advance of the event day, with consideration given to suitable methods of communication to inform participants of any last-minute changes. Where any briefing is provided on the day, this should take place outdoors where social distancing can be observed. This should not be held indoors.
- Posters that can be used to aid communication will be available from the COVID-19 section of the [Resource Library](https://www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus/resource-library).
SECTION 3: COMPETITION ACTIVITY BY TIER

SUMMARY GRID

- VIEW SUMMARY GRID: Tennis Activity By Tier

TIER 1 (MEDIUM)

Find out if your area is in this tier on the Government website or by using the postcode checker.

OUTDOOR COMPETITIONS

- Singles & doubles competitions are permitted for both juniors and adults
- LTA approved competitions (Grade 2 to 6), 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. Please note competitions may be limited in draw size depending on a range of factors including 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 six

INDOOR COMPETITIONS

- While restrictions on indoor sporting activity have been imposed, organised indoor singles and doubles competition at COVID-19 secure venues can continue to take place for larger draw numbers, given activity on court for individual matches is under six people (this also means activity such as Club/County fixtures can continue to be held indoors)
- Off-court, individuals should limit their social interaction with others and not socialise in groups of more than six

TIER 2 (HIGH)

Find out if your area is in this tier on the Government website or by using the postcode checker.

OUTDOOR COMPETITIONS

- Restrictions for playing tennis in Tier 2 outdoors are the same as for Tier 1 outdoors.

INDOOR COMPETITIONS

- While restrictions on indoor sporting activity have been imposed, organised indoor singles competition (not doubles) at COVID-19 secure venues can continue to take place for larger draw numbers, given activity for individual matches is limited to two people on court
- Singles and doubles competitions can take place for disabled people and U18s
Off-court, individuals should not socialise with anyone outside of their own household or bubble

**TIER 3 (VERY HIGH)**

Find out if your area is in this tier on the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk) or by using the [postcode checker](https://www.gov.uk).

**OUTDOOR COMPETITIONS**

- Restrictions for playing tennis in Tier 3 outdoors are the same as for Tier 1 & 2 outdoors, but there are additional restrictions limiting travel in to and out of Tier 3 areas

**INDOOR COMPETITIONS**

- Organised competition for adults cannot take place
- Singles and doubles competitions can take place for disabled people and U18s
- Off-court, individuals should not socialise with anyone outside of their own household or bubble
SECTION 4: ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR DISABILITY TENNIS

DISABILITY TENNIS COMPETITIONS

- To support the resumption of the LTA’s Open Court disability tennis programme, we have produced additional tennis specific guidance for venues hosting inclusive and disability-specific activity.
- Although activity levels were at a record high prior to COVID-19, participation of disabled people in sport has been greatly impacted by coronavirus – the staging of inclusive and disability-specific competitions is therefore particularly encouraged.
- LTA survey data shows that while an increasing number of disabled people are now returning to the court and are excited and happy to return to tennis, a large proportion say they are playing less now than they have been in the past. Nearly half feel uncertain or negative around their own safety and anxious about returning.
- Communication is crucial to help reassure disabled players about their return to competition, and so when running an inclusive event please provide competitors with clear guidance on social distancing protocols, venue layout and rules surrounding guides/assistants. For more information please contact disabilitycompetitions@lta.org.uk.
- If a player finds it difficult to follow certain protocols at an event, or needs additional assistance in order to take part in organised activity, they should contact the event organiser or LTA in advance, and we can make reasonable adjustments to ensure the safety of the player and others.
- The LTA continues to work with our national partners in this area. Competition organisers and officials are encouraged to read guidelines published by Activity Alliance to assist the reopening of activity in a welcoming and accessible way. Those running visually impaired tennis activity can also refer to guidance on the British Blind Sport website.

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

- Player/coach using a tennis wheelchair for activity should be either:
  - Able to transfer themselves from their day chair into a tennis wheelchair
  - A person from their household or bubble can transfer the player 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.
- Tennis wheelchairs owned by the venue should be sanitised pre and post activity. This should be conducted 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.

VI 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 at tennis venues 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 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

If players cannot travel on their own, it is advised they should be accompanied by someone from their household or bubble. Outside of the activity itself the law in relation to the ‘rule of six’ still applies, and so players that normally meet at a centralised point to travel to the venue with other players should ensure they do not meet in a group of larger than six people