

Guidance for Tennis Venues in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

Version 5 – Published 10 September 2020



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 Government announcements on the easing of lockdown restrictions, and the subsequent Government guidance on [gatherings, public spaces, and outdoor activities](#), the [phased return of outdoor sport and recreation](#) and for [providers of out of school settings](#) published on the Gov.uk website.

Alongside these guidelines, venues should read any updated information published by [Sport England](#) and on [Government guidance for providers of outdoor facilities](#).

Guidelines for playing tennis in Scotland can be read [here](#) and for Wales, [here](#).

INTRODUCTION

We know tennis venues will be keen to provide a full range of opportunities for your members as soon as it is safe and appropriate for them to do so. 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 have indicated the key additions and updates to these guidelines for Version 3 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 shift in focus to 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 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 should be read in conjunction with the guidelines for players and coaches, and the new guidance for 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](#).

GUIDELINES FOR TENNIS VENUES

IMPORTANT: Where a local lockdown is in place alternative measures and guidelines may be in place – venues in these areas are advised to check our main coronavirus information page at www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus before playing.

VENUE MANAGEMENT

- Ensure your club committee oversees and maintains the implementation of measures and any updates to them. Venues are advised to take time in implementing these updated guidelines
- All activity should be consistent with the government guidance regarding health, travel, social distancing and hygiene at all times
- 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), and appropriate measures put in place to ensure participants, staff and volunteers are protected. A risk assessment template is available from the COVID-19 section of the venue [Resource Library](#) on the LTA website. For larger group activity and in line with [Government guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity events](#), venues should consider transmission risk based on three variables: droplet transmission and aerosol generation; fomite transmission; and population.
- Guidelines will be updated as we progress through the different phases of Government measures - the LTA remains in discussions with Government, so we recommend you check the official LTA position at 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.
- This guidance is applicable to both outdoor tennis venues and indoor tennis venues

PRE-ATTENDANCE SYMPTOM CHECK

- Anyone attending a venue (including players, coaches, staff and any other visitors), 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](#)

NHS TEST & TRACE

- If someone who has played at your venue 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, venues should keep a temporary record of all those on site for 21 days, in a way that is manageable, and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed. This should also include keeping a temporary record of staff shift patterns for your venue for 21 days
- **[NEW]** For venues providing hospitality, from 18 September 2020, it will become a mandatory requirement have a system to collect NHS Test and Trace data, and keep this for 21 days

TENNIS ACTIVITY

- Singles and doubles can be played with people from different households, as long as players remain 2 metres apart as far as possible – meaning that four people from different households can play doubles
- Play is permitted on both outdoor and indoor courts
- For padel, doubles play is also permitted but extra care is advised and it should only be done so where players are confident they can maintain 2 metres apart
- **[NEW]** Restrictions on group numbers vary depending on if the activity is informal social play or organised group activity

INFORMAL SOCIAL PLAY

- **[NEW]** For informal social play, from Monday 14 September group size is limited to a maximum of six people by law. This means you can play tennis providing people only meet up with no more than 5 other people from different households and observe social distancing guidelines
- People should not go to a tennis venue socially in groups of more than six

ORGANISED ACTIVITY

- **[NEW]** The government has confirmed that organised activity for larger groups, including coached sessions, club nights and competitions is permitted as an exception to the limit of six, provided the activity is in accordance with the COVID-19 Secure guidelines published by the LTA for venues, coaches, players and competitions. The Government has made it clear that organised larger group tennis activity is only permitted where this is the case
- Any organised larger group tennis activity is only permitted subject to a thorough risk assessment and event delivery plan, taking into consideration the relevant LTA and Government guidance, and where clear and appropriate risk mitigation measures are in place
- 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
- The LTA recommends no more than 12 players on one full-size tennis court and surrounding areas at any one time, in order to ensure social distancing can be maintained at all times. Most tennis sessions will have far fewer than this number per court, but a scenario where this might apply is red stage tennis for children
- Whilst Government guidance does not state an upper limit for sport and physical activity participation events for adults, for those venues that have taken steps to ensure they are COVID-19 secure, we recommend that all

venues very carefully consider the maximum capacity that they can operate at safely and whilst ensuring social distancing can be maintained at all times. All venues should produce detailed risk assessments and event delivery plans taking into account these factors.

- For children, organised tennis activity including coached sessions should be limited to groups of no more than 15 children (plus coach(es), in line with guidance from the Department of Education on out of school settings.
- Depending on your risk assessment, some activity that might ordinarily be delivered in larger groups (such as Cardio Tennis), might still need to continue in smaller groups for now, to ensure the safety of participants.
- More detailed guidance on the 'Return to Competition' for officials and competition organisers has been published at lta.org.uk/coronavirus along with a template event delivery plan that can be used by venues organising club nights.
- Further information can be read on the Government's published [guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity events](#) and for [providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities](#)

COACHING

- It is important that both recreational play and coaching activity takes place. Venues should continue to liaise with their coach(es) to ensure an approach to activity is agreed that is feasible to deliver safely, and how coaches can be supported to deliver lessons and group sessions

COMPETITIONS

- LTA approved competitions (Grade 2 to 6), team competitions and recreational competition can be played as long as they adhere to the LTA's Return to Competition guidance, in line with the Government's [guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity participation events](#). Please note competitions may be limited in draw size depending on a range of factors including the COVID-19 secure capacity of the venue.
- Competitions can take place indoors and outdoors
- Detailed guidance on the 'Return to Competition' for officials and competition organisers has been published at lta.org.uk/coronavirus

INCLUSION

- Although activity levels were at a record high prior to COVID-19, participation of disabled people in sport has been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus outbreak – venues hosting inclusive and disability-specific tennis activity is therefore particularly encouraged
- Venues 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](#)

SUPERVISION & SPECTATING

- Where attendance of a parent/guardian (non-participant) is required, or a carer for a disabled player, it is permitted, but should be off court and limited to one per player where possible
- Supporters, parents, and other spectators should remain socially distanced whilst attending events. Spectator groups must be restricted to discrete six

person gathering limits and spread out, in line with wider government guidance

- Consider marking out specific boxes/areas for this purpose

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Venues should be fully aware of the latest Government advice on staying alert and safe (social distancing) which can be read [here](#)
- Venues should encourage players not to congregate on or around the court before and after play
- 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

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](#)
- Further information for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting is available on the [Government website](#)
- 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.ltabuyinggroup.co.uk>)
- Clean all common touchpoint surfaces (gates, door handles, handrails etc) regularly, wearing disposable gloves
- Further guidance on maintaining hygiene at your venue is [available on the Government website](#)

OUTDOOR FACILITIES

- 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 items that remain in place. Equipment such as benches may be returned if necessary to provide support to participants, but regular and appropriate cleaning must be undertaken.

INDOOR FACILITIES

- Indoor courts and bubble courts, and other indoor facilities such as changing rooms and gyms are able to open – **subject to specific guidance detailed on the [Government website](#). This guidance should be read in full and any necessary measures implemented before any indoor facility is opened.**
- Guidance provided around recreational play and group coaching is applicable for indoor venues, as well as outdoor venues. However, particular care should be taken in the production of a detailed risk assessment, to take into account the venue-specific considerations around indoor courts, access points and surrounding areas.

- While changing rooms and showering facilities can be opened, their use should in general be avoided where possible, with venues encouraging attendees to arrive at the facility in sports kit, and where possible to travel home to change/shower
- Changing/shower facilities however must be made available for participants with disabilities or special needs
- Clubhouses and pavilions can be already be opened for the public to access outdoor courts, use the toilet, or purchase food and drink (see additional guidance below on catering)
- Where toilet facilities are opened, particular care should be taken by those using them and those cleaning them
- Ensure soap and water is provided where any toilets are open
- Venues providing such indoor access should ensure clear signage is in place so people can find their destination quickly, putting in place queue management or one-way flow measures where appropriate, and limiting the number of customers in the building (both overall and in any particular congestion areas)
- Further guidance for the reopening of clubhouses and pavilions is [provided on the Government website](#)

BOOKINGS & PAYMENT

- Operate online booking for courts and sessions where at all possible, or alternatively use phone bookings
- It is no longer necessary to implement a buffer period between court/session booking slots, but venues should ensure appropriate signage is in place to guide safe entrance and exit to courts, with markings to facilitate social distancing around pinch points (e.g. court gates) and an area for people to wait safely for previous users leave the court
- Take any payments online, and avoid handling cash
- Online bookings can be facilitated through ClubSpark, which is free for all LTA Registered Venues, and via a free online national booking platform - LTA Rally - which makes it easy for players to find, book and pay for courts from their mobile phone. Email rally@lta.org.uk for more information on how to sign up to ClubSpark or Rally

COURT ACCESS

- Ensure measures are in place to minimise encounters between people, including in car parks and at entrances
- Court users 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 playing hours
- Consider different entry and exit routes to the courts/venue where possible, and ensure this is clearly marked
- Consider marking two metre distances at appropriate points, such as the entry gates to courts

EQUIPMENT

- Players are advised to bring their own equipment, and where possible players and coaches should limit sharing of equipment - however, use of communal rackets can be done subject to thorough cleaning measures between use
- Any coaching equipment used (e.g. cones) should be cleaned and wiped down afterwards

CATERING & RETAIL

- Bars, cafes and restaurants, including any food or drink facilities inside a clubhouse, can open – consumption is permitted on site (indoors and out) – **this should only be done in accordance with the [latest guidance on the Government website](#) for this, which should read in full**
- Make customers aware of, and encourage compliance with, limits on gatherings (for example, on arrival or at booking)
- **[NEW]** For venues providing hospitality, from 18 September 2020, it will become a mandatory requirement have a system to collect NHS Test and Trace data, and keep this for 21 days
- Hot and cold food and drink may also be served on a takeaway basis
- Consider mandating contactless or card payment, to avoid handling cash
- Further information is also provided on the [Food Standards Agency website](#)
- Retail units at a venue can be opened in accordance with [relevant guidance on the Government website](#)
- Government has now published details around the ‘Eat Out to Help Out’ scheme and clubs with café/restaurant/bar facilities will be eligible where food/non-alcoholic drink is purchased for immediate consumption on the premises, [available on the Government website](#).
- The Government has now published details on a temporary VAT cut to supplies relating to hospitality. If you’re a VAT registered business, you should be able to temporarily reduce the rate of VAT on supplies relating to hospitality, with more detail published in the [Government’s guidance](#).

COMMUNICATION

- Communicate with your members/customers clearly and regularly, making them aware in advance of the measures you are putting in place at your venue, and guidelines they are asked to follow
- Venues should make members/customers aware 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 staying safe outside your home](#)
- 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)
- Posters that can be used to aid communication will be available from the COVID-19 section of the [LTA Resource Library](#)