

AVON TENNIS LEAGUE RULES

(rules apply to all league types unless otherwise specified)

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1. Leagues Overview

(a) There are three groups of leagues (all doubles) administered by the League Committee:
Summer Leagues: May to July over 10 weeks. There are two leagues: Men's doubles and Women's doubles. Fixture dates and times are predetermined; on Friday evenings at 18:15. The leagues commence on the Friday following the May Day Bank Holiday and the remaining rounds are played on successive Fridays, with a week off on the late Spring Bank Holiday weekend.

Late Summer Leagues: August to mid-October over 10 weeks. There are three leagues; Summer Mixed, Summer Men's Seniors and Summer Women's Seniors. Fixture weekends are predetermined; teams agree when to play over the allocated weekend. The leagues commence two weeks after the final week of the Summer League and then every successive weekend with a week off on the August Bank Holiday weekend.

Winter Leagues: mid-October to March 31st, over 5+ months. There are two leagues; Winter (open) and Winter Seniors. Teams arrange their fixtures at any time during the Winter season. The leagues commence on the weekend following the final week of the Late Summer Leagues.

There is no league play scheduled during April.

- (b) The entrance fee, per team, will be set by Avon Tennis.
- (c) **The league results are to be maintained online using League Planner software under licence to the LTA. The leagues will be set up and monitored by the League Committee, with results being entered by the home club. Match dates and times (for all leagues except the Summer Leagues) are also to be entered by the home club.**
- (d) **Clubs must follow Safeguarding procedures.**
- (e) **Trophies awarded to Division 1 Winners** for any League competition shall remain the property of Avon Tennis.
- (f) Teams failing to comply with any of the regulations will render themselves liable to a penalty involving the deduction of points or any other action the League Committee considers appropriate.

2. Clubs, courts and facilities

(a) The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) have referred to tennis organisations by various names eg Places to Play, Venues. For the purposes of these rules, they will be referred to as "Clubs". The Avon Leagues are open to Clubs registered to the LTA.

(b) Clubs will be invited (by email) to submit entries to the Leagues. The date of the email and the deadlines will be (approximately):

Summer Leagues: email in mid-January, deadline mid-March

Late Summer Leagues: email in early June, deadline end of June

Winter Leagues: email in late August, deadline late September

If it is not possible to accommodate all the teams, then the entries will be considered in date order. **Teams that cannot be accommodated will be placed on a waiting list.**

- (c) Clubs must have access to two courts for each home match. **Each court must have a centre net band and suitable anchor. The home team must have equipment to measure the net height.** Any complaints concerning the conditions of the courts should be referred to the League Committee who will make such direction as it thinks fit, including direction that the relevant team or teams cannot take part in any of the Leagues unless the courts to be used for matches are brought up to a standard acceptable to the League Committee.
- (d) The venue at which a League match is played must have toilet facilities available to players.
- (e) A first aid kit and water must be available at the match venue.
- (f) The visiting players shall play, throughout the match, on the courts of their choice from those allocated by the home club.
- (g) Away teams cannot be expected to change courts during the course of a match other than by mutual agreement.
- (h) Umpires are not required, **but the point score in each game and the game score in each set shall be called clearly by the server prior to the commencement of each serve/game. Avon Tennis adopts the [ITF Rules of Tennis](#). Rules regarding unumpired matches can be found at [LTA Competition Regulations](#), see sections 5.55 to 5.56.**
- (i) For each match, a minimum of three new **ITF** authorised balls shall be provided for each court by the home team. If dated, the balls must be for the current season.

3. Teams and Players

- (a) Only bona fide members of Affiliated Clubs who have paid the appropriate full subscription at least fourteen days prior to the match shall be allowed to play for that club, provided they have not taken part in the same League competition for another club in the same season. **(Note that The Winter League (open) and Winter Seniors are separate competitions, as are the Summer Mixed and Summer Seniors.)**
- (b) Each competing team is represented by four players arranged in pairs. The Summer Leagues and Summer Seniors are single gender. The teams for the Summer Mixed, Winter (open) and Winter Seniors comprise two men and two women.
- (c) Teams must be ranked in order of strength, so that other players move up according to strength.
- (d) There are no age restrictions for Summer League, Summer Mixed, and Winter (open) Leagues. For Summer Seniors and Winter Seniors, players must be aged 45 or over **on the day the league commences.**
- (e) **Wheelchair players may compete in the league; they are allowed a second bounce of the ball.**
- (f) **Transgender players wishing to compete in the leagues do so on the understanding that there is no intent to deceive about their status to gain any competitive advantage. Other players should accept people in the gender they present and verification of their identity should be no more than that expected of any other player. For further information please refer to the LTA website.**
- (g) **Team-tying.** A player who has taken part in four matches in any one season for higher-ranking teams may not subsequently play for a lower ranking team in the same season. **In the Summer League and Late Summer Leagues, matches retain their original week number for team-tying purposes regardless of when they are played. In the Winter Leagues, the date the match was started is used for team-tying purposes.**
- (h) A player may not play more than ten matches in any of the leagues. This may be raised to twelve whenever the league includes a large division (7 teams instead of 6).
- (i) Summer Leagues only: a player may play only one match per week. If a match is postponed or rescheduled, then the players for that match must not have played for another team in the same week.

4. League Structure

(a) Each league comprises a number of divisions; the level at which each team plays being determined by the previous season's performance. Teams joining or rejoining the League are placed in the lowest division. Where there are several divisions at the same level (sub-divisions), the League Committee will determine the distribution of the teams across those sub-divisions. All divisions with the same initial number are of equal status.

(b) The sub-divisions have a maximum of six* teams. In the course of the season, each team plays the others in the division twice, home and away.

*Exceptions to this are the Winter Leagues (open and Seniors) which may have one or more divisions of seven in order to accommodate all the entries. Also the Summer Seniors Women's, because of the low number of entries, may have a non-standard number of teams in the division.

Summer League, Winter (open) League: one first division, two sub-divisions (A and B) in subsequent divisions with the lower divisions being expanded to four sub-divisions (A to D).

Summer Mixed: one first division, two sub-divisions in subsequent divisions

Seniors (all): one first division and such additional divisions as the League Committee will decide prior to the start of the season

(c) Where two teams from a club are in the same division:

Summer and Late Summer Leagues: they will be scheduled to play in week one or week two.

Winter Leagues: both fixtures must be played by the end of January. For these matches, if results are not submitted within seven days, the result will be declared null and void. In the event of postponement, the match must be played within the next seven days and the result submitted.

5. Matches

(a) Match scheduling

Summer League: the dates are pre-set on Fridays, all matches to commence at 18.15.

Late Summer Leagues: the weekends are pre-set, with the day and time of match to be agreed between the two clubs. The fixture dates and times must be posted online by the home club. A match may only be rearranged as a result of adverse weather conditions, mutual consent or exceptional circumstances.

Winter/Winter Seniors: Teams shall arrange their own fixtures by mutual consent by 15th November and these are to be played between the Friday following week 10 of the Late Summer Leagues and the end of March. **Fixture dates and times must be posted online by the home club by 15th November.** These may only be rearranged as a result of adverse weather conditions, mutual consent or exceptional circumstances.

(b) All matches shall commence at 18.15 for Summer League or at the agreed time for all other leagues. If a pair is not ready to start within 30 minutes of the scheduled start time, the opponents of that pair in the first round shall be entitled to claim the first set by 6-0. If that pair are not ready within 45 minutes of the scheduled start time the opponents of that pair shall be entitled to claim a walkover in the first rubber. If that pair is still not ready for their second rubber when called upon, a walk-over may be claimed for the second rubber. The captain should declare before the beginning of the second rubber that their team has claimed the first rubber/s.

(c) If both pairs of one team are unable to start within 45 minutes of the scheduled start time, each opposing pair in the first round shall be entitled to a walk-over. Likewise, any pair then not ready within 1 hour, will concede a walk-over in the second round.

(d) The match will have been deemed to start after the first serve takes place. The courts will have been allocated at the start of the warm-up and the courts can only be then changed by agreement of both captains.

(e) Each pair shall play one rubber against each pair of the opposing team. In the Winter Leagues, the pairings change between the rounds. One round is a men's doubles and a

women's doubles, the other round is two mixed doubles (Firsts and Seconds). The order in which the rounds are played is determined by the home team.

- (f) For the Winter Leagues, the first and second mixed pairs must be declared at the start of the match **if requested by either captain**.
- (g) All rubbers are the best of three sets with a tie-break to be played at six games all in each set, unless the following exception applies: A championship tie break may be played in place of the third set of any rubber if, in the reasonable view of the captains, there is a significant chance that a match might not be completed on one night, on the courts where it started, due to failing light where there are no floodlights, or where floodlights will be cut off, or due to adverse weather conditions. The only other reason a championship tie break should be played in any rubber is by mutual consent of both captains. A championship tie break is the first to 10 points with a margin of 2 and is scored as 1-0 or 0-1 on the score card.
- (h) **Break in play** In the case of illness or accidental injury after the start of play there will be allowed a maximum 5-minute suspension of play and if the player is not then recovered, the rubber will be forfeited.
- (i) In the event of bad weather, or because the courts are unfit for play, the match will only start with the mutual consent of both captains. In the event of an appeal against playing conditions when a match is in progress, the match can only continue with the agreement of both captains.

6. Points, Promotions and Relegations

- (a) **Points** shall be awarded as follows: Two points will be awarded for each rubber won. There are a further two bonus points, which will be awarded to the team with the most rubbers (or where the number of rubbers won is equal, most sets, or when the number of rubbers and sets is equal, the most games). In the case of a tie (number of rubbers, sets & games all equal), one bonus point will be awarded to each team (making the score 5-5). There is a total of ten points awarded for each match.
- (b) At the conclusion of each season, the order of all teams shall be determined by the number of points gained in all matches (whether played or by default) and the team scoring the highest number of points in Division 1 shall be adjudged the Champions for that year. If two or more teams in any one division score an equal number of points, the order of precedence in the division shall be determined by the head to head results between the teams concerned ie. points then sets then games won. If still equal, then the winner will be determined by total rubbers, then sets, then games.
- (c) If the number of sub-divisions is the same as the level above, then the top two teams in each sub-division are guaranteed **promotion** the following season. If the number of sub-divisions is greater than the level above, then only the top team in the sub-division is guaranteed promotion.
- (d) The bottom two teams in each sub-division will be considered for **relegation**.

7. Unfinished matches

- (a) If a match is started but not finished due to bad light or weather conditions, with the mutual agreement of both captains it can be completed on the same day on alternative courts, under lights if necessary, otherwise see below.
- (b) **Summer and Late Summer Leagues:** If a match is not started or not completed on the day through bad light or weather conditions, where possible it should be completed during the following seven days at the mutual agreement of both team captains. League matches shall take precedence over club play and friendly matches. Should the courts be unplayable for a whole week, a match arranged for that week may be completed at any time agreed by the team captains and sanctioned by the League Committee, and shall, in any case, be completed by one week after the end of the final Friday of the season.

Winter Leagues: If a match is not started or completed on the day, then it must be rescheduled before the end of March.

- (c) When a match is completed on another day, the previous scores shall hold good and the match shall continue from the position where it was left. If a member of a team is genuinely unavailable for a rearranged match, the player can be replaced by another player **of a similar standard**. Summer Leagues only: the replacement player must not already have taken part in a match scheduled for that week.

8. Walkovers

- (a) In the event of a walkover or partial walkover, the defaulting team must notify the Results Secretary of a valid reason within 48 hours of the default.
- (b) Any team giving three or more walkovers will be relegated and have their results declared null and void, and their opponents will forfeit the points for those matches also.
- (c) **Summer League only:** If a higher ranked team within a club, without just reason, gives a walkover or partial walkover whilst its lower ranked team/s play, it will suffer the following penalties: the higher ranked team giving the walkover will have 10 points deducted (4 points in the case of a partial walkover) and the lower ranked team/s will lose any points gained in that round of matches.
- (d) The League Committee retains the right to insist a match shall be played when a walkover may be prejudicial to overall league winners or to the promotion or relegation prospects of other teams. If a team refuses to play they will be penalised **a minimum of 10 points**.

9. Submitting Results

The home team must enter the results online by the Tuesday following the match, stating player names and set scores. A card still needs to be completed and signed by the two team captains, and photos of the card are to be retained by the both teams in case of dispute. In the case of a postponement of a fixture, the home club shall add a comment to the match online of such postponement not later than the day following that on which the match should have been played.

Winter League: if the match was not commenced then when a new match date has been agreed the match date is to be changed online by the home team.

All other leagues or if the Winter League match was commenced: when a new match date has been agreed then a comment should be added to the match stating when it is to be played. This is the responsibility of the home team.

- 10. **Protests** concerning play must, in the first instance, be reported to a member of the operational committee of the Club who, if considers it appropriate, can approach the Secretary of the League Committee with an official complaint in writing **or via email**. Complaints must be placed within ten working days of the match to which they refer. After considering statements from all teams involved in the protest(s), the League Committee shall notify the complainant and the alleged offender of its decision. If the League Committee's decision is disputed, the matter shall be referred to the Avon Tennis whose decision shall be final and binding on all parties.