

# **2024 Local Rules and Regulations**

## **GOVERNING RULES**

USTA Adult leagues are divided into layers of organization: National, Sectional (Eastern), Regional (**Western**), District, and then Divisions. Three levels of rules apply: The USTA League Tennis Regulations (National), the USTA Eastern rules (Section), and the Local Rules (Region). In addition, the USTA Code of Conduct applies. The local rules are to be read in a manner consistent with the Section and National rules whenever possible and are not intended to supplant those rules. The local rules are intended to identify only the most essential portions of the National and Section rules and only depart from those rules (available at [2024 National and Eastern Regulations](#)) as authorized by the USTA. For the purposes of local leagues, players should refer to the appropriate section (The Code) in "[2024 Friend At Court](#)" for unofficiated matches.

Clerical error should not determine the outcome of a league. Section League Coordinator (SLC) has authority to determine how an affected match will be corrected. All interpretations of local or sectional rules are to be referred to SLC and Chair of the Adult Competition Committee.

### **A. Rosters/Player Eligibility:**

1. A minimum of 8 eligible players (18&Over Adult Division 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, and 4.5) or 5 eligible players (Adult Division 2.5, 5.0) or 9 eligible players (40&Over Adult Division) or 6 eligible players (Adult Division 55&Over, 65&Over or Tri-Level and Mixed Division 18&Over or 40&Over) at each level of championship play must participate.
2. In **Western**, the maximum roster size for Adult 18&Over, Adult 40&Over, Adult 55&Over, 18&Over Mixed and 40&Over Mixed is **24** players. The Local League Coordinator may authorize the addition of players due to season ending circumstances.
3. Adult 18&Over and 40&Over leagues require a minimum of **50%** at NTRP level except for two team leagues which require **40%**. Minimum percentage level does not apply to any combined leagues, 55&Over and 65&Over.
4. Players must be 18 years of age prior to participating in the USTA League program. For older age groups, each player over the age of 18 shall have reached the required minimum age prior to or during the calendar year in which such player participates in his or her first local league.
5. All players must register through Tennis Link at [www.tennislink.usta.com/leagues](http://www.tennislink.usta.com/leagues). All participating team members must be registered prior to playing in a match. If an unregistered player participates in a match, all point(s) won on that court shall be reversed.
6. A player(s) may be added to a team within the local league season until **the last match of the local season.**

7. Requests for a registration refund or transfer to another team must be made by the league **registration deadline**. Only registrants who have not played any matches can be refunded or transferred.
8. A player shall play on only one team per age group, per NTRP level, per local league season. A player shall not play on teams having the potential to play each other during the same local season.
9. Captains should verify a player's level of play and background before the player "self rates". **Neglect of this responsibility may result in a grievance and may be grounds for removal of a captain and possible suspension from league play.**

### **B. Matches:**

1. Match format by level for local league only (not including local championships) see C6 for Post Season formats):
  - 18&Over 2.5, 5.0 = **3 courts (1 singles, 2 doubles)**
  - 18&Over 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5 = **5 courts (2 singles, 3 doubles)**
  - 40&Over = **4 courts (1 singles, 3 doubles)**
  - 55&Over = **3 courts (doubles)**
  - 65&Over = **3 courts (doubles)**
  - All Mixed = **3 courts (doubles)**
2. Each League shall consist of a minimum of two (2) teams. All teams must play a minimum of six (6) matches to be eligible for championships. (Excludes Tri-Level, 55&Over Mixed and 65&Over leagues which require a minimum of 5 matches.)
3. The match format for all local, area, district, and regional matches will be best 2 out of 3 sets with a match tie break in lieu of a 3<sup>rd</sup> set (first to 10 by 2 points). All matches will utilize regular scoring, and a set-tiebreak (first to 7 by 2 points) at 6-all in each set. The 3<sup>rd</sup> set tiebreak shall be scored as 1 set and 1 game for tiebreak procedures, and it will be entered as 1-0 for the winning team. All tiebreaks (set & match) should follow "Coman" tiebreak procedure for switching sides (switch after 1<sup>st</sup> point...then every 4 points thereafter - 5, 9, 13, etc.) Play must be continuous throughout the match, including the tie-breakers.
4. The team captain for each team shall exchange their team line-up simultaneously prior to the beginning of the team match. After lineups have been exchanged, team captains are allowed to make changes and substitutions in individual matches for the following reasons only: injury to, illness of, disqualification or no-show of a player prior to the start of such match. No other player changes are allowed on that scorecard for matches played on that day.
5. Teams are encouraged to field their players for each team match in order of strength. Local regulations may utilize a point system for scorekeeping to discourage stacking.

Buffalo, Ithaca, Rochester: In the 40&Over adult leagues where the match format is 1 singles and 3 doubles courts and there are only 2 teams in the league, all courts shall be worth 1 point. In the 40&Over adult leagues where the match format is 1 singles and 3 doubles courts and there are more than 2 teams, the 1st singles and 1st doubles courts shall be worth 5 points each, the 2nd doubles court shall be worth 4 points, and the 3rd doubles court shall be worth 3 points. In all other leagues, team match wins will be used for determining standings.

Syracuse and Binghamton: In the 40 & over adult leagues, all courts are worth 1 point.

6. There is a fifteen-minute default rule (inclusive of warm up time) in effect for all local matches. All late players are guaranteed a 5-minute warm up, and NO POINT PENALTY is allowed for a late player. In extenuating circumstances, a captain can reach out to a league coordinator regarding lateness, and the League Coordinator has the ability to extend the default time if deemed necessary. For staggered matches, a team cannot claim a default unless a court has been available to play for 15 minutes, and the opposing players are at least 15 minutes later than the arrival time. The arrival time for staggered matches shall be 75 minutes after the call time for the first courts.
7. A 10-minute warm-up, including serves, is permitted before the match begins. If the 10 minute warmup time is over and all players are not present, the affected matches shall not start until the 15 minute default time has expired. If players are not there at the start time, the line-ups must be adjusted as detailed below.
8. Defaults must occur from the bottom up. If a doubles player is missing, the line-up must be adjusted and that team placed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> doubles position. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> doubles teams (as designated on the scorecard exchanged) for the team with the missing player must then be moved up 1 position e.g. if the first doubles team is missing a player those players must be placed in third doubles and the 2<sup>nd</sup> doubles team moved up to first and the 3<sup>rd</sup> doubles team moved up to 2nd. No other changes in either team's line-up are allowed. Similarly, a missing singles player must be placed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> singles position. Third doubles and/or 2<sup>nd</sup> singles must be the first courts defaulted.
9. Cell phone use on the court is considered a deliberate potential hindrance. Turn off phones. Players may wear Smart Watches for activity tracking only.
10. The match officially starts when play of the first point is begun. In the event of a rain or a stoppage of play due to circumstances beyond the control of the players, completed individual matches will stand as played. An incomplete match shall be continued by the same players and resumed at the exact point - set, game, point - when play was halted. If players (s) are unavailable to continue the match on the rescheduled time or date then the individual match will be scored as either a retirement in favor of the team whose players are available or a double default if both teams are missing a player. The original line up may be changed on a court that has **not** officially started play even if the players completed warm-up.

11. It is the responsibility of the players to make sure they are on the correct court with the proper opponents. Captains should give their players the names of their opponents when sending them to their court. If there is an error in court positions played, the home team's scorecard will take precedence. **All matches stand as played.**
12. If score confusion occurs, the players count all points and games agreed upon and replay only the disputed points. If there is no agreement on the disputed point/game, play from a mutually agreeable score. If still no agreement, spin a racquet or toss a coin to settle the dispute.
13. A team that forfeits an entire team match or plays an invalid match (where less than 3 courts are played for a 4 or 5-court match or two courts for a 3 court league) without just cause may be penalized to the extent that all matches for the season will be considered null and void when determining team standings if it affects final flight standings for the team receiving the default; the team members may not be allowed to participate in league play the following season.
14. Players are allowed one three-minute medical timeout as needed.
15. Players, teammates, spectators, or coaches who interfere and/or are disruptive at matches are considered to have violated the standards of good conduct, fair play and good sportsmanship. This includes conduct before, during and after completion of the match. Teammates, spectators, or coaches may not volunteer advice on line calls, scoring, or on the conduct of the match. It is the responsibility of the teams to control spectators' conduct at all matches. Coaches are never allowed to interact with players or be present on the court during match play. Players shall inform any coach who violates this rule that they shall leave the court immediately.
16. **BUFFALO ONLY - Timed Match Procedure. (Other cities skip to 18):** Matches have been scheduled for 2 hours. Players have the responsibility to complete the matches in a timely manner. Matches started ON TIME, adhering to a ten minute warm-up and following proper change-over procedures should not exceed the time allotted. Courts and players must be available for ALL courts being played in that match. Prior to the start of the match, both captains shall agree upon a time-keeping device that will be used for keeping track of time. Captains should plan to arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the match for the purpose of exchanging line-ups and selecting a time-keeping device. If, at the 1 hour and 55 minutes mark, the match is not completed, (but the teams are in the second set or a third set tiebreak), the match should be scored via the following timed match procedure (Use the "timed match" option when entering the scores for the affected courts), in the following order:

- a. Complete the point being played at the 1 hour 55 minute mark. If, at the completion of the point, one team is ahead in that game (e.g. 15-love, 30-15, 40-love, etc.), or is ahead by at least 1 point in a 7-point set tiebreak, then that game or tiebreak is awarded to the team that is ahead. If, at the completion of that point, the teams are tied (in games or in the 7-point set tiebreak), then the players shall play one more point to determine the winner of that game or tiebreak, maintaining service order.
- b. The team that is ahead by one or more games in the 2nd set (at the 1 hour 55 minute mark or after “a” above), wins that set. If the teams are tied for games in the 2nd set, they shall play one more point, maintaining service order. The winner of that final point shall determine the winner of the 2nd set.
- c. If the teams have split sets (at the 1 hour 55 minute mark, or after “a” and “b” above), they shall play one additional point (in lieu of a 3rd set or 10-point match tiebreak) to determine the outcome of the match. The team that last served for the 2nd set point shall be the receiving team for this final point, and the team that last received shall be the serving team. The serving team shall select which player shall serve, and the receiving team shall pick which player shall return and from which side. The winner of this point wins the set and thus the match. This set shall be scored 1-0.
- d. If, at the 1 hour 55 minute mark, the teams have split sets and have begun a 3rd set tiebreak, the team that is up by one or more points wins the tiebreak and thus the match. If the teams are tied in the tiebreak, then the players shall play one more point, maintaining service order. The winner of the final point shall determine the winner of the set and match.
- e. If, at the 1 hour and 55 minute mark, the teams on a court have completed the first set but not yet begun the second set, the team that won the first set shall be deemed the winner of that match
- f. If, at the 1 hour and 55 minute mark, the teams on a court have not yet completed the first set, then the players on the court shall select a date/time/location to continue to play the match. If, on the make-up date, the teams on the court do not complete the match within the time allotted, then the match shall be scored pursuant to the order set forth in B. 16. (a) through (e) above.

17. For Binghamton, Ithaca, Rochester and Syracuse: Timed match procedures do not apply. All matches shall be played to completion.

18. The rain/darkness procedure for outdoor matches only is as follows: Rained-out matches, and/or matches that need to be suspended before completion due to darkness, should be rescheduled as soon as possible. When it is raining or rain is threatening, the two captains or their designated captains MUST contact each other at least two hours before the start of the match. This is the responsibility of the home captain, but either may initiate the call. Captains or their designated sub MUST be accessible by phone the day of the match. If a captain designates a sub, that captain MUST inform that week's opposing captain and provide him/her the sub's name and cell phone number by the day before the match. Captains will decide whether to: reschedule the match, delay the decision and continue to monitor conditions for another hour, or agree to assemble at the site (with brooms and towels if necessary). Rescheduling from the original date can be done two ways: select a rain date for the whole team OR piecemeal- with each court making their own arrangements. Rescheduling arrangements must be completed within seven days from the original match date. If a match is in progress and must be suspended due to rain or darkness, the original line-up must be played in the make-up match. Captains must contact the Local League Coordinator within 48 hours with an update as well as the new match date(s), once determined. In the event of rain and a subsequent full match reschedule, any court previously defaulted must be rescheduled and played.
19. Players are prohibited from leaving the court in the last 15 minutes of a timed match.
20. In the event of rain and a subsequent full match reschedule, any court previously defaulted must be rescheduled and played.

### **C. Advancement:**

1. All players other than Self-Rated and Valid Computer Rated Appealed-Down Players are eligible to progress to championship level competition below National Championships if that player has played on the same team in at least two matches at the same NTRP level in the same Age Group during its local league season and is otherwise eligible. A maximum of one default received by the player during local league competition shall count for advancing. Computer rated players who appeal up use the same advancement criteria as Computer-Rated Players.
2. All **Self-Rated and Valid Computer Rated Appealed-Down Players** are eligible to progress to Local and Regional Championship if that player has played on the same team in at least two matches (no defaults count) at the same NTRP level in the same Age Group during its local league season. **In the Adult and Mixed Divisions, all Self-Rated and Valid Computer Rated Appealed-Down players** are eligible to progress to Sectional Championship if that player has played on the same team in at least three matches (no defaults count) at the same NTRP level in the same Age Group during its local league season, local championships and regional championships.

**NOTE:** For the 55&Over Mixed and 65&Over Adult leagues, all players, regardless of rating type, are eligible to progress to championship level competition below National Championships if that player has played on the same team in at least one match (no defaults count) at the same NTRP level in the same Age Group during its local league season and is otherwise eligible.

In the 55&Over Mixed and 65&Over Adult leagues, all players, regardless of rating type, are eligible to progress to National Championship level competition if that player has played on the same team in at least two matches (1 default counts) at the same NTRP level in the same Age Group during its local league season and is otherwise eligible.

Matches Required to Advance to Championships for Adult and Mixed Divisions				
Rating Type	Local Championships	Regionals	Sectionals	Nationals
Computer & Appealed Up	2 matches on the same team, 1 default can count	2 matches on the same team, 1 default can count	2 matches on the same team, 1 default can count	3 matches on the same team, 1 default can count
Self-Rated & Appealed Down	2 matches on the same team, no defaults count	2 matches on the same team, no defaults count	3 matches on the same team, no defaults count	4 matches on the same team, no defaults count

- 3. Player Declaration Prior to Championship Play** - Players who play on two or more teams at the same NTRP level and age group in the Eastern Section must declare which team they will represent prior to the start of any local, regional or sectional championship should more than one team qualify to advance. This declaration is done by playing in a championship match.

If a player declares for a team and that team is eliminated from championship play, after the completion of that championship, the player is eligible to re-select and play for any other team, in any local, regional or sectional championship that has not started, as long as they meet eligibility requirements for that team, regardless of region.

Exception – If a team wins a 2024 Early Start League Local Championship and a player played in the Local Championship, the player may choose to represent another team from another local league that started after January 1, 2024 in the same region. Prior to the start of Regional Championships in that region, the player will have to declare which team they will represent in the Regional Championships. If the player plays in a second Local Championship, the player must select one of the teams for which they played in the Local Championships. Players will not be allowed to play in a championship match for a team from another region, until all teams for which the player played in a local championship match have been eliminated.

4. If two teams are scheduled for the same regional or sectional championships and share more than 7 eligible players only one team may advance. The teams must choose which team will advance, and the other team must concede their championship spot to the second-place team. The league coordinator must be notified no later than 48 hours following the conclusion of the season.
5. In the event of a tie in a league or championship that uses match wins, whether in round robin or single elimination competition, the tie shall be broken by the first of the following procedures that does so:
  - a. Individual Matches
  - b. Head-to-Head (if all teams involved in the tie have played each other the same number of times)
  - c. Least Number of Sets Lost
  - d. Least Number of Games Lost
  - e. Game Winning Percentage
  - f. Coin toss

In the event of a tie in a league or championship that uses points per position, whether in round robin or single elimination competition, the tie shall be broken by the first of the following procedures that does so:

- a. Head-to-Head (if all teams involved in the tie have played each other the same number of times)
  - b. Least Number of Sets Lost
  - c. Least Number of Games Lost
  - d. Game Winning Percentage
  - e. Winner of first doubles
6. All local, regional and sectional championships will consist of the following:
    - 18&Over 2.5 and 5.0 = 1 singles and 2 doubles
    - 18&Over 3.0, 3.5, 4.0 and 4.5 = 2 singles and 3 doubles
    - 40&Over all levels = 1 singles and 4 doubles
    - 55&Over and 65&Over all levels = 3 doubles
    - 18&Over Mixed, 40&Over Mixed and 55&Over Mixed = 3 doubles

#### **D. Captain's Responsibilities/Procedures:**

1. Both home & visiting captains should make contact at least 3 days prior to the match to confirm match site, start time and number of courts. **It is the responsibility of the home team to inform the visiting team of any dress code required by the home site, as well as the court type to be played on.**
2. In the event a court needs to be defaulted, the opposing captain must be contacted **via email at least 24 hours prior to the time required by the affected facility to cancel courts** prior to the start of the match. Opposing captains must confirm receipt of the email. **If defaults are not communicated in this timeframe, the defaulting team will be responsible for covering the match fee charged by the club.**



3. In the event a court is defaulted due to lateness by either team, the following applies. If the court is used, the court fees continue to be the responsibility of those that used the court per that leagues' procedure. If the court is not used, the defaulting team is responsible for the court fee if requested by the home club.
4. Captains shall be present at every match or assign someone to be acting captain.
5. Complete your line-up **in writing** on your scoresheet and exchange scoresheets with the other captain simultaneously prior to the beginning of the team match. **If it is a staggered match, the players for the later matches MUST be designated on the lineup scorecard.**
6. **Both team captains are responsible for inputting scores into TennisLink within 48 hours.** At the completion of each team match, the captains (or acting captains) from each team shall confirm the accuracy of the scores for each court prior to leaving the match site. The first team to report will input the scores, the next to report will "confirm or dispute" scores. **Captains may forfeit their right to dispute a scorecard if they do not confirm match results in TennisLink within 48 hours.**
7. The home team must supply a new unopened container of USTA approved balls for each individual match.
8. A facility must provide a minimum of **three (3) courts** for a 5-court league, and 2 courts for a 3-court or 4-court league must be available at the commencement of a team match. Facilities must provide **two hours** of court time per court. **NOTE: There are some pre-approved exceptions in the Buffalo leagues due to limited court availability during spring/summer 2024.**
9. When only three courts are available for a 5-court league at the commencement of a match, the individual matches shall be played in the following order: #1 singles and #1 and #2 doubles, followed by #2 singles and #3 doubles. For a 4-court league, the two courts should be: #1 singles and #1 doubles. The captains may agree to change this order by mutual consent.
10. If, during a league match, an irresolvable dispute arises between the players about the accuracy of calling the lines, any player may suspend the match to request a court monitor to be present for the remainder of the match. The players shall seek out their respective captains or acting captains to arrange for the mutually acceptable court monitor. If there is no acting captain available, the players shall mutually designate a person, acceptable to all players, to monitor the match. If possible, or in the event the teams cannot agree on a monitor, two monitors are suggested (with 1 monitor being selected by each team). The monitor(s) shall stand at the net post and make a line call or resolve any other dispute only if requested by any player. The monitor(s) shall not **independently** make a line call or other ruling. The line call or ruling of the monitor(s) shall be final, controlling and not appealable. If there are two court monitors on the court and they disagree regarding a call, the call made by the player(s) stands. Please recall no one can leave the court in the last 15 minutes of a timed match (Buffalo only)

11. Reschedules: Requests for full match reschedules are not permitted. If you are struggling to field a full line-up, as many courts as possible should be played on the originally scheduled date (preferably 3 out of 5 courts or 2 out of 3 courts to make the match valid). If fewer than 3 out of 5 courts, 3 out of 4 courts or 2 out of 3 courts are played, then only those courts to make it a valid match shall be rescheduled.

The USTA League Coordinator may reschedule any unplayed or incomplete matches occurring in the last two weeks of the season, which would impact the determination of a league winner. Any cost incurred would be shared by both teams.

Teams must participate through a facility within the Section unless prior approval has been authorized by Section League Coordinator and Adult Comp Committee Chair. No matches or make-up courts may be played outside the USTA Eastern geographic boundaries.

12. Captains have one week from the day of the originally scheduled match to agree on a reschedule date for an incomplete court (s). Two viable dates must be given as options by the team that did not request the reschedule, from which the team requesting the reschedule can choose. If a date is not confirmed within this time period, the League Coordinator will set the date. Captains must report the rescheduled date to the League Coordinator. Incomplete court (s) that occur within the last two weeks of the season may be rescheduled by the League Coordinator.

13. All Captains will be notified in writing prior to the first match of each season of the payment structure required by each facility.

### **Administrative Processes:**

All grievances shall be submitted to either the Section League Coordinator or the Adult League Coordinator for processing.

There is a \$50 fee to file a grievance. If the grievance is upheld, the fee will be refunded. There is a \$75 fee to file an appeal of the grievance decision. If the decision is modified in any way, the fee will be refunded

### **1. NTRP Appeals:**

Computer rated players may only appeal their ratings electronically on the TennisLink website. If the decision is denied, there is no further right of appeal. If players choose to appeal and it is granted, they may NOT go back to their pre-appeal level, the decision is final and binding.

Self rated players may also appeal on the Tennislink website, with a decision made by the NTRP Appeals Committee. There shall be no further right of appeal from the decision of the

NTRP Appeal Committee. Please refer to the Eastern Section website for Medical Appeals forms and instructions (see link below under Self-Rate Grievances).

## **2. NTRP Grievances:**

If a captain or coordinator believes a player is competing at one level or more below their actual skill level, a grievance may be filed at the Section level only. Players with a valid computer or benchmark rating or granted an automatic appeal of a computer rating are not subject to an NTRP Grievance.

Pursuant to USTA Eastern C.5, a separate NTRP Grievance Form must be completed for each player being grieved and forms containing multiple names will be dismissed without consideration.

## **3. Local Grievances:**

Informal notification should be made within 48 hours of the incident or dispute by the captain to their coordinator.

The grievance must be filed prior to the commencement of whichever occurs first: (a) the involved team's next match listed in Tennislink, whether or not the involved player participates or (b) within 48 hours after the end of the local league season, prior to the next listed match for either team involved in the conflict or dispute.

In order for a grievance to be valid, it must state the specific rule or rules within the Local Rules, USTA Regulations or standards of good conduct, fair play and good sportsmanship that have been violated.

The Coordinator shall forward the grievance to the opposing captain, who shall have a set time limit to respond. The coordinator shall forward the grievance and response to the Chair of the Grievance Committee. The Local Grievance Committee shall review the grievance and make a determination in accordance with its procedures.

Appeals after the grievance decision may be made to the Sectional Appeals Committee within the time period and in the manner specified in the decision.

All grievance forms can be found on the USTA Eastern Website [here](#).