

USTA League Suspension Point System Championship Year 2022

Frequently Asked Questions

- Question:** If a player or captain is under suspension from a Championship Year 2021 Grievance, is that suspension still valid in Championship Year 2022, under this new system?

Answer: Yes, the player or captain must complete the current suspension, and will be subject to suspension points under the new system when their eligibility resumes.
- Question:** Are USTA League programs that do not advance to a National Championship required to follow the USTA League Suspension Point System?

Answer: No, non-advancing USTA League programs are not required to do so. Each Section, District/Area or Local League should clearly state in the regulations for such leagues the grievance process. Further, because many players participate in both advancing and non-advancing leagues, for consistency and clarity by players and captains, it is strongly recommended that non-advancing leagues follow the USTA League Suspension Point System.
- Question:** If the Head Referee or the Referee's designee assessed suspension points for conduct at a League Championship, does a grievance have to be filed for those points to count against a player or captain?

Answer: No. Such points will be reviewed and approved by the Head Referee (for points assessed by the Referee's designee) and/or Championship Grievance Committee (for points assessed by the Head Referee). These points will nearly always be for on-court behavior witnessed by the official.
- Question:** May a grievance be filed for the same issue if the official has already assessed points?

Answer: No grievance will be accepted in these cases.
- Question:** May a Championship Committee assess points in a matter for which points were not assessed by an official (e.g. profane language directed at tournament desk staff) without filing a grievance?

Answer: No. A grievance must be filed with the Championship Grievance Committee.
- Question:** When would a Captain be subject to a grievance and suspension points for actions by another party (playing partner, team member, spectator)?

Answer: Points may be assessed to a Captain in a grievance upheld against their player when they were the playing partner, and/or were found to have failed to intervene reasonably in the matter (e.g. never asking their partner to stop hitting balls in anger at their opponents). Such points would be assessed under "Violations by Player".

Points may be assessed to a Captain in a grievance upheld against a USTA member associated with a player when they are found to have failed to intervene reasonably in the matter (e.g. sitting next to the player's spouse watching the match, while the spouse is using obscene language and never asking them to stop). Such points would be assessed under "Violations by Those Associated with Player".
- Question:** Will suspension points assessed when a grievance is upheld be recorded immediately, or when the appeal date communicated to the player or Captain has passed?

Answer: Suspension points assessed will be recorded immediately by the designated USTA party.

8. **Question:** When a suspension threshold has been reached, does the suspension begin immediately or when the appeal date has passed or the appeal process has been completed?
Answer: The suspension begins on the date indicated in the written notice made to the player or Captain that a grievance has been upheld and the suspension points assessed have reached the threshold for suspension.

Under League Regulation **3.04A(4)a** “If the grievance was upheld, the individual is subject to all penalties imposed by the Grievance Committee during the appeal process.” A player or Captain may not play while appealing a grievance upheld against them if the suspension points assessed resulted in a suspension threshold being reached.

9. **Question:** What is the difference between “self-rating lower than true playing ability” and “failure to self-rate in accordance with the Guidelines, or omission of information regarding player’s tennis history”

Answer: “Self-rating lower than true playing ability” generally includes two situations. First, a self-rated player is dynamically disqualified (reaches the “clearly above level” rating mark three times). Following the DQ, the player is moved up to the next level and, based upon the Section choice in regulation 3.03E(1)a, matches played may be overturned.

Second, a self-rate grievance may be filed and the NTRP Dynamic Disqualification Review Committee upholds the grievance. In this case the committee may find that a player did answer the self-rate questions correctly, but had information, or reasonably should have considered information, and self-rated one level higher. This usually occurs when the player competed in non-USTA matches or tournaments, at the next higher level and was competitive, and/or played in those formats at the lower level against NTRP-rated players and showed themselves to regularly be better by a reasonable margin yet self-rated at the same level.

“Failure to self-rate in accordance with the Guidelines, or omission of information regarding player’s tennis history” are situations where following a self-rate grievance, a review of the player’s athletic history reveals that the self-rate form was not completed accurately. A finding of intent is not necessary to uphold such a grievance, nor does a misinterpretation of a question insulate a player from culpability. The self-rate questionnaire has been reviewed and modified over the years so that the questions are very concrete, removing room for “reasonable” misunderstanding.

If a player is careless/rushed when completing the form, and a committee finds that to be a mitigating factor, or the player makes a very compelling case for why they misunderstood, that may lead the committee to assign 8 or 9 points, and the player will be moved up and eligible to play immediately if there is a League open for them.

The reality is that these grievances are almost never filed as a technicality; other players and captains don’t care if a player isn’t showing skills or having success to a degree that leads to someone looking them up, and seeing that they played in high school, or college and so absent an appeal, “shouldn’t” be playing at the level that they are.

The grievance committee should be looking at both the information submitted/omitted, what result that had on the self-rating granted, and the player’s results. When those together lead a committee to conclude that the player didn’t follow the guidelines/omitted information, would have received a higher rating if they had, and/or their play results should have demonstrated to the player that they were playing at the wrong level, we wanted the committee to have the option to assign 10 suspension points, so the player would have to sit for 3 months and not just be able to move up with “no penalty.”

- 10. Question:** If a grievance is filed against a player and during the investigation by the committee, can the committee assign anyone not originally named in the grievance suspension points?
Answer: It might depend on the situation, but due process and the grievance process should govern. If, for example, the grievance investigation reveals that other parties lied to cover-up the actions in the original grievance, or the investigation reveals that other parties engaged in the same violations but were not named in the original grievance, a new grievance should be filed. Under 3.03A(7) a league coordinator may file (most) grievances at any time, exactly to cover situations like this (the player can't say "you didn't get me before my next match, so I am clear").
3.03A(7) Regardless of any other regulation, a league coordinator or a member of a Championship Committee may file a grievance at any time...

- 11. Question:** Does a grievance committee have to follow exactly what's listed as examples in the violations? If a player hit the ball towards a player, did not hit them, but was determined by the committee not to have been intentional, can they label that as "unsportsmanlike conduct" instead of "flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct?"
Answer: The grievance committee should use the examples as guidance, as they don't cover every situation. As nearly every grievance occurs without the grievance committee witnessing the action firsthand, there will always be judgment calls.

In this example the grievance committee could choose to either unsportsmanlike conduct, with the rationale that there was no intent, or flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct, with the rationale that a player must always be in control of their racket, the ball and themselves.

The reason that flagrant unsportsmanlike has a range of 8 – 10 is that for a first offense, giving 8 points to send a strong message would not result in the player being suspended. If the player was already in the 12-month period following a first suspension and received 8 points they would reach the next threshold, but that is warranted as the player is continuing to engage in inappropriate behavior.