

Court Etiquette: Elm Grove Tennis Club

Court etiquette for the EGTC follows the USTA's "**The Code**" which is a summary of the *procedures and unwritten rules that custom and tradition dictate all players should follow to help keep tennis an enjoyable game for all.*

These etiquette "rules" are geared for **Match Play and Tournaments**, but even during our club's **social tennis events**, we the EGTC Board, would like all to feel good about knowing the basic rules, customs, and courtesies of the game, and by using them whenever playing the game.

Principles

1. **Courtesy.** Tennis is a game built on a foundation of **cooperation and courtesy** from all participants. We can help keep tennis a fun game by praising your opponents good shots, and by **NOT**:
 - Conducting loud postmortems** after points, or displaying undue displeasure over an errant shot. (It's good sports psychology to stay "UP" even after a poor shot.)
 - Complaining** about our opponents using shots like **lobs or drop shots**.
 - Embarrassing** a weak opponent by either **hitting too hard** or (equally embarrassing) by being **overly gracious** to them.
 - Losing your temper**, using **foul language**, **throwing your racket**, or **slamming a ball** in anger; or
 - Sulking** when you are losing. Remember: **We never lose if we give our best effort!**
2. **Counting points played in good faith.** **All points played in good faith stand.** Even if a player realizes during a point that a mistake was made (ie. the serve was from the wrong side), they shall continue playing the point and take corrective action only after the point has been completed.

The Warm-up

1. **The warm-up is not practice.** Players should provide an opponent a 10 minute warm-up during which they should try to hit the ball **to the opponent**, offer **volleys and overheads**, take their **warm-up serves**, and **return the serves to the server at a moderate pace.** (Taking the warm-up serves before the match begins helps continuity.)

Making Calls

1. **Each Player makes calls on their own side of the net.** It is a player's responsibility to call **all shots landing on, or aimed at the player's side of the net**, being guided by the unwritten law that **any doubt must be resolved in favor of the opponent**. A ball that **cannot be called out** (no part of the ball touches or is inside of the line) is **"good"** (not a "let"). A ball that is 90% out is still 100% good!
2. **Calls when looking across a line or when far away.** The call of a player looking **down the line** is much more likely to be accurate than that of a player looking **across a line**. When you are looking across a line, don't call a ball out unless **you can clearly see part of the court between where the ball hit and the line**. It is difficult for a player (or his/her partner) who stands near **one baseline (or sideline)** to question a call on a ball that lands near the **other baseline (or sideline)**. Remember: If you or your partner are in doubt that a ball is clearly out, **the benefit of the doubt must go to the opponent**.
3. **Timing of line calls.** It is your obligation to call **all balls on your side** (as soon & clearly as possible), to help your opponent make calls **when the opponent requests it**, and to **call against yourself** (except your 1st serve) any ball that you clearly see out on your opponents side of the net. The primary objective in making calls is **accuracy**. All players should cooperate to attain this.
4. **Service calls in doubles.** In doubles, the receiver's partner should call the **service line**, and the receiver should call the **side and center** service lines. Either partner may call a ball that either clearly sees as a fault. Neither the server nor the server's partner shall make a fault call on the **first service**, even if they think it is out, because the receiver may be giving the server the benefit of the doubt and play it. In that situation, if the receiver plays a first service that was a fault, and does not put the return in play, the server or server's partner **may make the fault call**. The server and server's partner shall call out any second serve that either clearly sees as out.
5. **Partner's disagreement on calls.** In doubles if one partner calls the ball out and the other partner sees it as good, they shall call it **"good"**. This is most tactfully done by quietly mentioning your opinion to your partner, and letting your partner concede the point. **Giving your opponents the benefit of the doubt** is a higher value than possibly hurting your partner's feelings by asking him/her to recant their call!
6. **Courtesy calls.** Any **"Fault"** (serve), **"Out"**, or **"Let"** call must be made clearly and quickly ie. **before the return has landed** otherwise the ball continues in play. Try to not return balls that are clearly **"out"**. (It is preferable to hit these "faults" into the net or catch them to minimize distraction to the other players.) No matter how obvious it is to a player that the opponent's ball is out, the opponent is entitled to a prompt and audible **"out"** call or hand signal (arm and index finger pointing out).
7. **Spectators.** Do not enlist the aid of spectators in making line calls-**it's your duty**.
8. **Opponents call questioned.** If you genuinely **doubt an opponents call**, you may ask **"Are you sure of your call?"** If your opponent reaffirms that the ball was out, the call shall be accepted. If the opponent acknowledges uncertainty, the opponent loses the point. There shall be no further discussion. **If you think you got the bad call, don't worry, you just got the "Karma of the Universe"!**

9. **Service Out calls corrected.** If a player instinctively calls a ball out, and then realizes that **it was actually good**, the point shall be replayed **if the player returned the ball within the proper court**. If however the player's weak return resulted in the opponent getting the point, the player should give the opponent the point. If the player failed to make the return at all, the opponent wins the point. If the mistake was made on the **second serve**, the server is entitled to two serves.
10. **"Let" calls when balls roll on the court.** When a ball from another court enters the playing area, any player may call a let as soon as the player becomes aware of the ball. (All should let good judgment regarding **safety** guide them in making this call), The player loses the right to call a let if the player unreasonably delays in making the call, ie. after missing the shot.
11. **Other self-policing calls.** A player shall promptly acknowledge if they: **1. Hit a ball before it crosses the net** (it's OK to reach over the net to hit a ball that landed on your side but due to the wind or backspin bounced back over the net onto the opponent's side), **2. Touched the net** (with body or racket, even in the follow-through), **3. Deliberately carried or double hit the ball** (inadvertent/single-motion double hits are OK), or **4. Hit a ball that bounced more than once on their side.**

Scoring

1. **Calling out the score.** To avoid controversy over the **score**, the server should announce the set score (e.g. 5-4) **before starting each game**, and the game score (e.g. thirty-forty) **before serving each and every point**. Announcing the game score and each **"Second serve"** is an advisable courtesy.
2. **Disagreement on score** . If players cannot agree on the **score**, they may go back to the last score on which there was agreement, and resume play from that point, or players may count all points and games agreed upon and replay only the disputed points or games. Alternately, they may spin a racket or toss a coin to resolve the dispute.

Serving and Receiving

1. **Server's request for third ball.** When a server requests three balls, the receiver shall comply when the third ball is readily available. Distant balls shall be retrieved at the end of a game.
2. **Service lets.** Any player may call a service "let" that they hear or see. The call shall be made before the return of serve goes out of play or (better yet) is hit by the opponent.
3. **Foot faults.** Players should observe the rule of **no foot faulting**. A player may warn an opponent that the opponent has committed a flagrant foot fault. If the foot faulting continues, the player may call a flagrant foot fault as a "fault". Habitual foot faulting is no less **cheating** than bad line-calling.
4. **Obvious faults.** A player shall not put into play or hit over the net an obvious fault. To do so **1. Wastes time, 2. Constitutes rudeness, and 3. May even be a form of gamesmanship**. On the other hand, if a player does not call a serve a fault, and gives the opponent the benefit of the doubt on a close call, the server is not entitled to replay the point, even if s/he thought it was out and wasn't expecting the return of serve.

5. **Receiver readiness.** The receiver shall play to the reasonable pace of the server. Yet, the receiver shall make no effort to return a serve when the receiver is not ready for any reason. If the receiver attempts to return a “quick serve”, he/she was presumed ready.
6. **Delays during service.** When the server’s second service motion is interrupted by a ball coming onto the court, the server is entitled to **two serves**. When there is a delay between the first and second serves, the server gets one serve if the server was the cause of the delay, but **two serves if the delay was caused by the receiver or if there was outside interference**. The receiver is the judge of whether the delay to clear a ball from the first fault, or from another distraction is sufficiently prolonged to justify giving two serves.

Hindrance Issues

1. **Talking during a point.** A player **shall not talk while the ball is moving toward the opponent’s side of the court**. If the players talking interferes with the opponent’s ability to play the ball, the player loses the point, e.g. A player hits a weak lob and loudly yells at his partner to get back. If the shout is loud enough to distract an opponent, the opponent may claim the point based on a **deliberate hindrance**. If the opponent chooses to hit the lob & misses it, they lose the point because they didn’t make a timely hindrance call.
2. **Feinting with the body.** A player may **feint** (fake a movement) with the body or racket while the ball is in play. A player may change position at any time, including while the server is tossing the ball. Any other movement or any sound that is made solely to distract an opponent, including, but not limited to waving the arms or racket or stamping the feet is not allowed.
3. **“Lets” due to hindrance.** A “let” is not automatically granted because of a hindrance. A let is authorized only if the player could have made the shot had the player not been hindered. A “let” is also not authorized for a hindrance caused by something within a player’s control. ie. his/her hat falls off.
4. **Injury.** When a player deliberately injures an opponent and affects the opponent’s ability to play, the opponent wins the match by default. This would include an injury resulting from an opponent hitting a ball or throwing a racket. A player may withdraw them self from a match or tournament only because of injury, illness, or a personal emergency.
5. **Grunting.** A player shall avoid grunting or making other loud noises. This could be called a hindrance and the point replayed.
6. **Stalling.** From the beginning of the match, **play must be continuous**. Attempts to stall or to extend rest periods while switching sides (generally 90 sec. or 1&1/2 min. on the odd-game changeover, of 120 sec. or 2 min. for the set break) for the purpose of recovering from being short-winded or tired are clearly illegal.
7. **End of match.** Shaking hands (with your partner and opponents) at the end of the match is a gesture of good sportsmanship and an acknowledgement by the players that the match is over. (We can feel good about giving our best effort regardless of the score.)
8. **The Golden Rule of EGTC Etiquette: “Play the game to the best of your ability, have fun, but also try to help your partner and your opponents have fun by keeping it fair, courteous, and light-hearted”.** (It’s been a gentleman’s game, let’s keep it that way.)
Adopted from the USTA: The Code.