



2026 USTA SoCal Section Regulation Highlights and Local League Rules

Inland Empire

This document provides the day-to-day rules that apply to USTA SoCal Adult Leagues. If an area has a specific Local League Rule, it is listed in the text in **blue font**. The key National and Section regulations are included. For the complete USTA Southern California Adult League Rules and Regulations, please visit [USTASOCAL.COM](https://ustasocal.com).

The Code of Tennis emphasizes acting with courtesy and always giving your opponent the benefit of doubt. The players on the court ultimately will make decisions together and those decisions and the points will stand as played. Our goal in the USTA League program is to play fun and fair tennis with each match!

Team/ Player Registration:

Year-end ratings from December, 2025, will be in effect for all 2026 league play.

Players must be USTA members during the league season to be eligible to join a team.

- **Initial Roster Deadline:** By the deadline set by the Area League Coordinator, each team should have the correct number of players to fill a line up for a full match. Teams that do not have a minimum roster may not be included in scheduling. (i.e. 3 lines: 5 or 6 players (depending on format); 4 lines: 7 players; 5 lines: 8 players. Mixed: 3 men and 3 women)
- **Final Roster Deadline:** The last date to add a player to a roster (up to the maximum number of players for the league). **IE- The date will be approximately 4-5 weeks after the season starts.**
- Players must be on the roster on TennisLink before the match starts to be eligible to play in a match. If not, they are ineligible and the line will be defaulted. Players may register for the team up until the match default time or by the Local registration deadline, whichever comes first. It is the captain's responsibility to verify players are on their roster before placing them in a line-up.
- 50% of the team must be 'at level' by their first match and must be maintained throughout the season. Matches not played in compliance may be disqualified. The last (based on registration timestamp) 'below level' player(s) to join the team will be removed from the roster and matches they played will become defaults. Plan team rosters accordingly. In a league with only 2 teams, they may be 40% 'at level'. A team that advanced to Nationals may opt to 'Move Up' and is excluded from the 'at level' requirement.
- Straight level NTRP teams- players may be .5 NTRP below the level of play (i.e. a 3.5 can play up on a 4.0 team). For combined level leagues, the maximum difference of 1.0 NTRP between players is allowed (i.e. 8.0 can be a 3.5 and 4.5 player).
- Strength Order: There are no requirements about playing lines in strength order. For Tri-Level Leagues, at least one player must be 'at' the designated level, and the partner may play up one level (.5 NTRP point).
- Captains should make sure that new self- rated players have an accurate rating. All matches played at the Self Rated/ Appealed down level **will be reversed** in all "live" leagues if a player strikes out (they have 3 matches played well above their chosen rating level as identified in the NTRP system). Matches played at the promoted level will stand if the league is at the new higher level.

- Self-rated (S) and appeal players (A) are eligible for dynamic disqualification. Computer rated players (C) and Mixed exclusive players (M) are protected at their rating level until the next year end rating period.
- Players may play on two teams at different levels in a league area. Players may play on two or more teams at the same level in different league areas.

Weekday/ Weekend Leagues: In Adult 18+, 40+, 55+, Tri-Level and SoCal Doubles, players may be on a Weekday and Weekend team at the same level if there are at least 4 teams in each division for separate league advancement. If there are less than 4 teams in the secondary league, there must be a playoff between the league winning teams to determine the advancing local league winner. Under these circumstances, players may not be on teams in both leagues. The exception is if one of the leagues is not advancing (local only).

- For teams that advance to National Championships or National Invitationals, there are additional registration requirements on team formation in the following year for the same league/ level due to the Move Up, Split Up Rule. See details under Championships page 10.
- **Refunds/ Credits:** USTA SoCal will issue a TennisLink credit for players who ask to be removed from their team within the first three weeks after the system season start date for the league. Reasons can be injury/ illness, lack of availability, etc. The player is responsible for filling out the [LEAGUE CREDIT REQUEST FORM](#) to receive a \$28.85 credit (less the non-refundable \$3.15 fee) which will be valid for 364 days after being issued. Once processed, the player will be prompted to apply the credit the next time they register for a team. The player will be removed from the team when processed. No refunds.
- **Withdrawing teams:** Players on teams withdrawing from the league after the Initial Roster Deadline will not receive a credit for any league fees. However, they may transfer to a different team.

Match Schedules/ Courts:

Schedules will be posted online approximately 7-10 days before the first match.

[IE- You will receive an email when it is available to be viewed.](#)

To see your team's schedule go to the USTA website, click on TennisLink, click on USTA Leagues, click on your team name to take you to your team page. To view the season on one page, click on Match Schedule tab, key details are listed. Also, Captain's Report for contact information (home phone number may be listed not cell). Captains should only *enter their cell number* in their USTA account. Go to Manage Account on the upper right corner, follow steps to edit personal info.

Teams will have roughly half home and away matches. All teams must host a minimum number of home matches.

[IE- Home team provides courts, away teams provide balls.](#)

The home team is responsible for making sure the court conditions are ready for play. Courts need to be safe for players- free of ball mowers and other equipment. Home Captains should initiate text communication with opposing captains about court conditions if there are any concerns (i.e. wet courts, anticipated heat at match time). Consider driving time when communicating about delayed start times.

[IE- USTA League plays on hardcourts in IE Local League. If both captains agree in writing, clay courts may be used. Courts may not have contrasting lines or tape for pickleball however, blended markings for youth tennis are acceptable \(lighter tone of the same color\).](#)

Captains must confirm match details 3-4 days in advance including date/ time of match, if/ when warm up courts are available, court numbers (if known), line defaults (if known in advance). For split time matches, confirm how many courts to start and how many to follow and which lines will be played. Provide location and any facility specific information- i.e. parking or traffic events in the area.

IE- Play in line order of line 1 Singles, line 1 Doubles, line 2 Doubles, line 3 Doubles unless captains mutually agree to play in a different order for that match only.

Majority of lines must be played (completed/ or retired) for a match to count in the standings. In a 3-line match, 2 lines must be played; in a 4-line match, 3 lines must be played and in a 5-line match, 3 lines must be played. Matches which do not meet the requirements are invalid and will not count toward standings.

All matches must be completed by the season end date. When a league does not complete all matches and team results are uneven in the standings, the Section administration will determine the winner using available metrics based on completed matches.

Formats of Play:

- **Best 2 of 3 regulation sets with a match tiebreak played in lieu of a third set.** When teams split sets, matches will be completed by playing a Coman match tiebreak (first to 10 points leading by 2 points). No coaching is allowed between the first and last point of the match.
IE- If all players on court agree and the court time is available, a full 3rd set may be played; however the score will be entered as 1-0 into TennisLink. Decision is made after teams split sets.
- **Timed Match Procedure is to be used when there are time restrictions for a hard stop** (i.e. lights out, court reservation time is limited). It is not meant for personal time constraints, unless all players agree.
- Players should be aware that they are playing a timed match when they start. A home team player is responsible to be the time keeper (and set a phone alarm) to stop 5 min prior to the court end time so they can follow the TMP to resolve the outcome for the match.
- If players are well into a match when it is suspended by weather, players may all agree to apply the TMP to resolve the winner of the match instead of resuming play.
- **TIMED MATCH PROCEDURE**
- All tiebreaks in USTA Leagues use the Coman rotation. Switch ends after the 1st point and every 4 points after. Players continue to serve on the same end of the court. Winner must be ahead by 2 points in either the set or match tiebreak. **COMAN TIEBREAK PROCEDURE** Set tiebreakers determine the winner of the set when games are 6-6. Tiebreaker is first to 7 points. Match tiebreakers determine the winner of the match when sets are split 1-1. Tiebreaker is first to 10 points.
- **Split Time Matches:** Many areas will utilize split times for matches when necessary for court management because all courts are not available at the same time. There will be matches that follow after early matches complete. Default time for later matches will be set as a 'not before' time and a court from the earlier match must be available. Players should be ready to start play as soon as a court is available. IE- Split time matches will be noted on tennislink. (i.e. 3 courts will start at 11:00am, 2 courts will follow immediately after but not before 12:30pm). Singles lines may follow the doubles lines but that information must be communicated before the start of the season and will be noted on tennislink.

Line Ups:

- **Written line ups must be exchanged simultaneously by the match start time (varies by league).**

- Print scorecards in TennisLink. Texting or emailing the line up ahead of time is also acceptable (verify you have a cell #). It is not acceptable for a captain to write their line up on their opponent's scorecard 'from memory'. Please notify ALC if the captain requests to do this. It is acceptable for a captain to write their line up at any time prior to the exchange.
- The captain must designate an acting captain if they will not be at the match. They will be responsible for the lineup exchange and any needed match oversight.
- Captains may ask to see a player's photo ID to verify identity or age.
- If a player is missing at match time, they should be moved to the lowest line according to the default procedure. Opposing captain may change their line up accordingly at that time.
- Players may only be listed in one position in a match line up even if the lines are playing at different times.
- 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 scorecards will be adjusted accordingly. All matches stand as played.
- Captains should verify player names/ rating levels on the scorecard prior to play starting. Use full names to avoid errors when inputting scores.
- Before Tri-Level and all combined level matches (I.e. Mixed, 55 and Over, 65 and Over), verify that player rating combinations are correctly 'at level' by line. If not, try to rearrange the players to make the match valid, correct the line up to play the most lines possible.

Defaults:

- **Please avoid Team Defaults (all lines defaulting or majority of lines not played).** Joining a league is a commitment to play matches. League winners should be determined by playing matches not winning by default. Only a few players are needed to play enough lines to have a complete match. If captains agree, they may choose to play different combinations and reschedule a date to complete any lines needed to complete the majority of lines so the match will be valid.

League Format	# of lines for valid match	Min # of players	Play lines:
3 lines (1S/ 2D)	2 lines	3	1S/ 1D
3 lines (3D)	2 lines	4	1D/ 2D
4 lines (1S/ 3D)	3 lines	5	1S/ 1D/ 2D
5 lines (2S/ 3D)	3 lines	4	1S/ 2S/ 1D

Teams must make good faith efforts to complete every match. Captains are expected to work together with courtesy and cooperation to do their best to play a valid match.

A team in contention may be ineligible to advance to the post season if they give or receive a team default (or incomplete match) without a demonstrated effort to play (i.e. texts, emails). If a team in contention receives a full team default, matches played by the defaulting team in the same round will be removed from the league and can impact the overall standings. When there are incomplete matches in unflighted play, USTA SoCal will determine the league winner. Repeat defaulting captains/ players may face disciplinary actions including suspension of players in future leagues.

IE- Teams are expected to make up lines in order to complete the majority of lines in a match so the match is valid. Please note on scorecard at the line up exchange which line(s) will be played at a later date. Captains may exchange player names or may set the date but determine players prior to match day.

- **Default time:** Default policy varies by local area of play. Late arriving players (within default time) may still have a 5 min warm up. In the spirit of good sportsmanship, matches should not be defaulted and then played 'for fun'. Matches should count if played.

IE - 5 mins late: loss of toss and 1 game

10 mins late: loss of toss and 2 games

15 mins late: loss of toss and 3 games

More than 15 mins late: default

Line Defaults (prior to line up exchange): If you have a known default, please let the opposing captain know prior to the match out of consideration. (Do unto others...) The least number of lines should be defaulted and as many players as possible should be utilized.

Line Defaults (after line up exchange):

Captains receiving a late default (without prior notification) will be able to change their line-up. The defaulting team may not rearrange their line-up once line up is exchanged. At this time, the captain receiving the default may change the names of the players receiving the default.

Assigning Defaults: Defaults may be assigned to any player who would have been eligible to play that line in a match. (i.e. must be the correct level in combination with their partner and on the team roster at match time).

Matches must start in line order due to the defaults rule in USTA. Defaults are taken at the lowest line.

Example: If the #1 doubles line is a default after lineups have been exchanged

- Line #2 moves up to play the #1 line. • Line #3 line moves up to play the #2 line. • Line #3 is defaulted.

Example: If there is a default on line 1 singles, line 2 singles moves up to play the line 1 position.

Example: In Tri-level Leagues, the default is taken on the same line and no shifting of lines applies.

Example: If higher lines started playing, allow them to finish and enter the default on the lowest line.

Player substitutions: An eligible player may be substituted into the line-up in case of injury, illness or disqualification of line-up player prior to the match starting (1st point played). If it occurs during warm up, the new player is entitled to a 5 min warm up. Other players in the line-up may not be changed. If a line is rescheduled (not started yet) and a player becomes unavailable or injured, another eligible player may be substituted.

Rescheduling matches: Please make every effort to play on your scheduled date.

- **Unplayable conditions:** In case of rain, it is based on wet court conditions at match time. It is most important that people are safe on the courts. For liability reasons, a facility director may make that decision or more commonly, it will be determined by the players in the match.
- Teams should wait 30 min after the scheduled start time to see if conditions change. Captains/ players may agree to wait longer or may agree to leave sooner if the courts don't appear they will dry out.

The heat rule states if the air temperature at the court location is **95° or higher in IE**, matches may be rescheduled. Please use [ACCUWEATHER](#).

IE- Home Captains should initiate text/ phone communication with opposing captain about court conditions if there are any concerns (i.e. wet courts, anticipated heat at match time). Please consider travel time.

- If captains agree, you may move a match to the visitor's club or neutral site if the conditions are playable. Captains may also play later start lines at their scheduled time if courts are wet for the early start time in split time matches. Early lines may be treated as make up matches. Work together to make decisions on conditions and reschedules. Be proactive when possible.
- Matches may be mutually rescheduled ahead of time if the forecast is certain that conditions will be unplayable. (I.e. heavy rain for hours up to the match time and no sun/ wind to dry out courts). Use your best judgement knowing you will need to reschedule.

-Please communicate any line defaults due to player availability in advance. If a match is rescheduled due to weather, the default is waived and the full match will be played.

- **Interrupted play:** If a match needs to be continued after play has started, Captains need to note scores, side/position of players so the lines can resume with the same players and exact score from when play was halted. Lines that have not started play may opt to change players in the line-up. If players cannot agree on a reschedule date, apply the Timed Match Procedure to see if a winner can be determined if teams agree.

IE- Lines may be played individually if it helps to coordinate the same players in the match.

- **Requested rescheduled matches:** Captains are encouraged to honor reschedule requests when the opposing captain provides reasonable notice prior to the scheduled match. That said, teams should NOT automatically expect to receive the opportunity to reschedule a match. Rescheduled matches will fall under the 'No Penalty Policy' or under the 'Penalty Policy'. If a team requests a reschedule due to lack of available players, the Penalty Policy will apply. If a captain intends to enforce the penalty, it must be confirmed with the opposing captain (text or email). They may opt to not penalize the other team and play all lines.

Penalty will be a 1 line default in a 3-line or 4-line match and 2 lines are defaulted in a 5-line match.

The team who agrees to reschedule any portion of the match should offer 3 dates to reschedule and determine which line will be defaulted in leagues with singles/ doubles or Tri-level. Defaults need to be taken from the lowest line levels. Options for a 1 line penalty: line 2 singles or line 3 doubles or line 3 doubles in 3 line leagues. Options for a 2 line penalty (5 line league): lines 1 and 2 singles or line 2 singles and line 3 doubles.

No penalties apply if the home facility has an unplanned event and no courts are available at match time. Penalties are carried over when matches need to be rescheduled again. (I.e. a rescheduled match with a penalty gets rained out)

Allowed rescheduled matches due to Championships: If 4 or more players on a team are competing for the same area at Sectional/National Championships on their scheduled local league match day, no penalties will apply to the rescheduled match. Captains may verify the roster players in question. **Reschedule as soon as the team advances.**

IE- If part of the match can be played, please play those lines as scheduled and reschedule the balance. For Tri-Level leagues, only reschedule line levels that are affected unless both captains agree to a team match reschedule.

All rescheduled matches need to be emailed to ALC with old and new date, team names and match ID# within 7 days of the original match date.

Captains are expected to work together with courtesy and cooperation to do their best to play a valid match. If teams cannot come to an agreement on a reschedule date, the ALC/SLC may select a day/ time for the match to be played.

IE-Captains accommodating a reschedule should provide new dates first. If it is a requested reschedule and after a reasonable number of dates have been offered there is no agreed to date, the team requesting the reschedule will default the match.

Completing and scoring matches:

- **Confirm** the match score between all players before leaving the court. Confirm completed scorecard with opposing captain so correct scores/ names are entered.
- Report/ write the score down from the point of view of the winning team (not home/ visitor). (I.e. we won the match and won the first set 6-4, lost the 2nd set 3-6 and won the 3rd set 1-0). The order is important and games will make a difference in rating calculations.
- **Please enter scores the same day of the match.** Scores not entered within 48 hours may be entered by the League Coordinator as a Double Default. If a portion of the match is being played later, notify the ALC with the latest date needed to complete the match so it is current in Tennislink.
- The home captain is responsible for entering scores in TennisLink however, either captain may input. Please review final scores and full player names to be input, do not guess. The opposing captain can dispute input within 48 hours of input. Correctly entered scores and player names are important because they affect NTRP ratings. Captains should encourage their players to review their scores in Tennislink for accuracy.
- **To enter scores**, click on the date next to your match on your TennisLink team page or enter the match ID# under Enter Scores on your home page.
- **Match type dropdown options:**
 - Completed- Most matches should fall into this category.
 - Retirement- One match has begun and a player needs to stop playing (usually injury or time issue) Only enter games played.
 - Default- For a late arrival, no show or ineligible player. Enter the names of players winning the default line only. Score will be 6-0, 6-0.
 - Timed Match- This option is mainly for limited time court reservations or evening league matches when lights turn off. Follow the Timed Match Procedure to complete match.
- **Corrections:** If there is a mistake on an entered scorecard (incorrect score or player), click to dispute the match in Tennis Link if you are the non-entering captain and email the ALC office.
Always **include the match ID#, date and both team names.** Please cc the other captain since both captains must confirm the change before it can be updated. If you are a captain that is cc'd, please reply quickly if you agree or if you do not agree, state what you believe to be accurate. If teams cannot agree, the ALC will gather information and then determine which score will be entered into Tennislink.
Please double check your input before you finalize to save extra rework. Thanks in advance!
IE: Email address: Inlandempireleagues@scta.usta.com

TennisLink: How ties are broken in standings and individual matches

- Match Wins (overall record of matches won)
- Individual Wins (overall number of lines won)
- Head-to-Head (between teams tied on IWs, which team won when they played each other)

- Least Sets Lost
- Least Games Lost
- Games Won %
- In Adult 40 and Over 4-line leagues, if all metrics are tied within a match down to the GW% (excluding any defaulted line), the winner of line 1 doubles will determine which team wins the match.

Tennis Link: Information available from your personal page. (Shows 'Welcome, your name...')

- "Team Summary" tab is your most used page. It shows your schedule, standings, match results, list of players. You can print your scorecards and enter scores by clicking on the date next to your match.
- "Match Schedule" tab shows all matches for a season listing the home/ visitor teams, date, location and match ID #. Captain/ co-captain phone number also shows here.
- "Captain's Report" tab has contact information (emails and phone numbers) for all captains in the league.
- "Player Roster" tab shows your registered players, their ratings, and phone numbers.

League Specific Rules

Age requirements:

18 and Over Leagues- Players must be 18 before they can register to play.

40 and Over, 55 and Over and 65 and Over- Players may play if they reach this age in 2026.

Rating requirements:

All players must have a current USTA NTRP rating to register.

New players or players with expired ratings will need to complete the self-rate questionnaire to register.

Players with an M (mixed) or T (tournament) rating must self-rate to register for a men's or women's league team.

Mixed Doubles

USTA 18 and Over Mixed Doubles, USTA 40 and Over Mixed Doubles, and USTA 55 and Over Mixed Doubles

- 3-line format- all mixed doubles
- Combined rating level teams: Partner ratings are added together.
- Pairs may have up to 1 point rating level difference (i.e. 3.0 + 4.0 for a 7.0 team)
- Pairs may total less than the rating level for the league (i.e. 3.5 + 4.0 for an 8.0 team)
- Advances to Sectionals and USTA Nationals/USTA National Invitationals

Adult Leagues

USTA Adult 18 and Over, USTA Adult 40 and Over

- Format of play varies by local area.
- Sectionals format Adult 18 and Over (2 singles/ 3 doubles); Adult 40 and Over (1 singles/ 3 doubles). Nationals format Adult 18 and Over (2 singles/ 3 doubles); Adult 40 and Over (1 singles/ 4 doubles).
- Rosters must have a minimum of 50% of players at NTRP level. (Areas can set a higher 'at level' minimum)
- Ratings may be 'at NTRP level' or .5 (one level) below.
- Lower level players may 'play up'; higher level players cannot 'play down'.
- Lines play in order due to the default rule. Singles then doubles matches in line order.

Adult Leagues - Combo Ratings

USTA Adult 55 and Over, USTA Adult 65 and Over

- 3-line format- all doubles
- Combined rating level teams: Partner ratings are added together.

- Pairs may have up to 1 point rating level difference (i.e. 3.0 + 4.0 for a 7.0 team)
- Pairs may total less than the rating level for the league (i.e. 3.5 + 4.0 for an 8.0 team)
- Advances to Sectionals and USTA Nationals/USTA National Invitationals

SoCal Tri-Level Doubles Leagues

Tri-level Men's or Women's, Tri-Level Mixed Doubles

- 3-line format- all doubles
- Each line is a different NTRP Level.
- At least one of the two players by line must be 'at NTRP' level. Partners may play up one level (.5 NTPR)
- If a default occurs in Tri-level, it is taken at the same line level. (No shifting of lines)
- Advances to Sectionals and Tom Fey National Invitational (most levels)

SoCal Fall Doubles Leagues

- 3-line format- all doubles
- Straight NTRP rating level teams
- Advances to Sectionals only

Elite Level Leagues (Plus leagues)

Capstone 40 and Over 5.0+

- 3 line format- all doubles

SoCal Fall Doubles 5.0+

- 3 line format- 1 singles/ 2 doubles

Leagues advance to Sectionals and Las Vegas National Invitational Event

Grievances:

Online submission forms, rules/ guidelines and FAQ's about filing a Grievance may be found on the USTA SoCal website. [LEAGUE GRIEVANCE FORM](#)

Sportsmanship- If any captain wishes to lodge a grievance against a player or another captain for rule violations, it must be submitted prior to the next scheduled match for the team involved in that league (typically 7 days) or within 24 hours of the end of the Local League Season End Date, whichever comes first. It is recommended to discuss the situation with the ALC first. Teams are responsible for the behavior of their spectators. Encourage cheering respectfully for both teams.

NTRP/ Ratings:

Dynamic Disqualification-

Players with a self-rating (S) or appeal rating (A) are subject to dynamic disqualification. If they are playing with a provisionary rating and their dynamic results are at a level significantly higher, they may 'strike out'. If they exceed the threshold in 3 independent matches, they will be disqualified at the 'too low' level and promoted immediately. Matches played at the lower level in any live league will be reversed.

Dynamic disqualification leagues include Adult 18 and Over, Adult 40 and Over, Adult 55 and Over, Mixed 18 and Over, Mixed 40 and Over and SoCal Fall Doubles.

Players with a C (Computer) or an M (Mixed exclusive) rating are not subject to dynamic disqualification based on results. These rating types may not be challenged with an NTRP Grievance.

NTRP Grievances against Self rated players- If credible written or online documentation can be presented that the player answered incorrectly or omitted information from their player history that resulted in a rating too low, it can be submitted to the NTRP Committee for further investigation. Submit via online So Cal form.

[LEAGUE GRIEVANCE FORM](#)

National Suspension Point System- USTA SoCal follows the USTA National Suspension Point System.

[2026 SUSPENSION POINT SYSTEM INFORMATION](#)

[2026 SUSPENSION POINT SYSTEM CALCULATION TABLES](#)

[SUSPENSION POINT SYSTEM FAQ](#)

Advancement/ Championships:

2026 Key Dates:

[SEASON END DATES](#) (see local area calendar for local league's end dates)

[SECTIONALS CALENDAR](#)

[2026 League Nationals Schedule](#)

League winners will be determined using these tiebreakers in the following order for League standings.

- Match Wins, Individual Wins, Head-to-Head, Least Sets Lost, Least Games Lost and Games Won %
- If there is a team default to a team in contention for first or second place, matches played by the defaulting team will be removed for all matches played in the same round.
- In the event the league season cannot be completed, the local league winner will be determined by actual matches played by all teams or another method determined by the ALC and SLC.

Player eligibility for Sectionals and/ or Local League Playoff:

All players need to have played a minimum of 2 Local League matches to be eligible.

- Computer rated players (C or M): 2 matches needed but may include 1 default win.
- Self-rated or Appeal players: 2 matches are needed. (no default wins)
- Players can only play for one team per level at Sectionals. If both teams advance, shared players will have to commit to playing for one team. The first match played will determine the team they will compete on during the entire Sectional Championship.

Sectional Championships:

- **Local League winners (LLW)** will advance directly to Sectionals, once confirmed by the ALC.
- **Local league playoffs** may take place when there are two flights in the league or an unflighted schedule. Typically, this occurs in a league/ level with a large number of teams. Players must be eligible to advance to the playoff match with their two qualifying matches.
- **Weekday/ Weekend Leagues:** In Adult 18 and over, 40 and over, Tri-Level Doubles and So Cal Fall Doubles, if there are a minimum of 4 teams in both weekday and weekend flights, each winner will advance to Sectionals. If fewer than 4 teams, a playoff may be needed between the two local leagues. Players may only be registered to one team if the league format results in a potential playoff.
- **Wildcard Opportunities:** When a team is needed (for scheduling purposes only), the top 2nd place team in SoCal based on the highest games won % may be invited.

Sectionals Default Deposit

Participation at Sectionals events are commitments on behalf of the captain and players of a team to be able to field a full roster for the duration of the event. Teams are expected to alert the ALC and Tournament Director in advance if they are unable to provide a full roster so an alternate team may be invited. It is disappointing for players and teams to register anticipating match play only to receive a default. There is a cost for travel and frustration incurred by teams and staff when defaults occur.

Captains will submit a \$100 credit card deposit to ensure their team will comply for their event matches. The card will only be charged if they default at the event. The Tournament Committee will allow for appeals to the charge that may be granted in the case of a documented emergency.

Player eligibility for USTA Nationals

Adult 18 and Over, Adult 40 and Over, Adult 55 and Over, Mixed 18 and Over, Mixed 40 and Over

- Computer rated players (C or M): must complete 3 matches (may include 1 default win)
- Self-rated (S) and appeal (A) rated players: must play 4 matches (no default wins included) in the specific league and level to be eligible to compete at Nationals.

Player eligibility for National Invitationals

(Tri-Level, 65 and Over, 55 and Over Mixed, Las Vegas Open)

- Players (all rating types) must complete 2 matches (may include 1 default win)
- Trilevel National Invitational has specific rating requirements. Only players with a C (computer rating) may participate. Players may only compete at their level (no playing up) at the event.

Move Up / Split Up Rule addition:

Move up/ Split up rule (2.06A) applies to teams that have won the So Cal Sectionals and are eligible to participate at a National level Championship. Any player eligible to participate is considered part of the team, even if they chose not to. If a second place team replaces a team at Nationals, both teams are considered National teams for the following MUSU year. The playing options for returning National teams and players in the year following their event are as follows:

Move up: The whole team may also opt to 'move up' to compete at the next higher NTRP level, either entirely or partially. If the league has a '% at level' requirement, it is waived. They can add players to the roster beyond the original team.

Split up: For those who opt to compete together in the same Division, same Age Group, and at the same NTRP team level as their National team(s), if their NTRP rating allows, there is a limit on how many players may return to the roster.

A Computer rated player who played 3 matches (including a default win) or a Self-rated or Appeal player who played 4 actual matches is subject to the split up rule. Any player eligible to participate by meeting these match requirements is considered part of the team, even if they choose not to play in the National Championships. Players ineligible due to insufficient matches face no restrictions the following year. Please verify with your ALC if you have questions about a specific player or players.

- **A maximum of 3 players in USTA Nationals Leagues** (USTA Adult 18 and Over, USTA Adult 40 and Over, USTA Adult 55 and Over, USTA Mixed 18 and Over and USTA Mixed 40 and Over leagues.)

- **A maximum of 6 players in Nationals Invitational Leagues** (SoCal Mixed 55 and Over, SoCal 65 and Over and SoCal Tri-Level league)

This will be audited by the Section however, captains and players are responsible for maintaining compliance. Team rosters not in compliance with the player maximum will be corrected by removing any players who registered after the maximum was reached. Matches played by that player(s) will be reversed due to player ineligibility.

Links to National Regulations/ The Code: Please make sure that your team is a positive example of goodwill on the court. It's a quick read but a good reminder for all of us when situations get tough. It is the responsibility of the captain to understand the rules and ensure that their players are familiar with the most common situations and play using the principles of **THE CODE**.

If there is a reason to research the correct rule in a match, stop playing and look it up in your SoCal Local League Rules.

2026 USTA LEAGUE RULES & REGULATIONS

FRIEND AT COURT

Common On Court and general match rules are summarized in the last 2 pages of this document and in the linked brochure. Rules Specific to Leagues contains format and registration details by league.

MATCH RULES & ETIQUETTE PAMPHLET

Wishing everyone good luck, great sportsmanship and a winning experience during the USTA Season!

ALC Inland Empire- Charlotte DeHesa Inlandempireleagues@scta.usta.com

Common Rules Questions During Match Play:

General Rules for the match:

NO coaching is allowed at ANY time during the match. So Cal leagues are specified to be Match Tiebreak format.

Spectator behavior (including pros, coaches, players and captains):

Captains and players may be held responsible for the behavior of their spectators.

Spectators **may not**: talk to or distract players on the court; coach, either verbally or visually; comment or make visual signals on line calls; sit on the court; get involved with any dispute between the players on the court. A captain may clarify a rule only if asked by a player. Spectators may not sit on the court. Pets should not be on the court during a league match even if the facility allows.

Cell phones and smart watches must be placed in airplane mode or turned off during a league match. It is assumed that if you are checking your phone that you are receiving coaching.

Recording matches: Taking photos or filming during league play must have permission from all players on the court.

Tracking the score- Score should be called out after each point of play by the server or serving team. If your courts have score tenders, change consistently either at change of ends or after each game.

Start/ Stop of play

Warm up- Players should try to hit shots directly to their opponent cooperatively to ensure a good warm up

Friendly transfer of balls- Return the balls gently to the serving team or by leaving in a convenient location on the court at a changeover. Do not practice hard returns on out serves during the match. If a delay in service is the fault of the receiving team (i.e. returned out serve), the server is entitled to two serves. If it is caused by the serve (i.e. out serve rolled into playing area of receiving team), the server continues with a 2nd serve.

- **Starting a new set-** Switch ends if the game total is odd, stay if even. If a set tiebreak was played, switch ends from where you finished. Team that received the first point of the tiebreak serves the first game of the 2nd set or match tiebreak. Teams may change serving order at this time.
- **Breaks-** Changeovers during a set are 90 seconds. After a set finishes, players may take a 2 minute break. Continuous play after the first game of any set or during a tiebreaker. Players may sip water or towel off but may not sit down.
- **Bathroom breaks-** Try to time during a changeover or end of a set but may be taken as needed. - **Water bottle refills-** Must take place during a changeover not during a game or tiebreak in play. - **Medical Time Out-** 3 minutes per treatable condition (injury, illness or heat related condition): one during warm up and one during match. Maximum time allowed where blood is present is 15 minutes for evaluation/treatment. All visible bleeding must be completely stopped. An eligible player may be substituted in the lineup if the MTO takes place during warmup and the player cannot continue.
Be reasonable on time especially when restrooms are needed and not located nearby or if supplies are needed to treat a condition.

Calls/ Confusion:

- **Calling Balls In or Out:** A ball that cannot be seen clearly landing with space outside the line, is in. Players who are looking down the line instead of across the lines should make the call for best visibility. Opponent should get the benefit of the doubt if players are unsure.

- **Partners disagree on call-** The point is awarded to the opposing team. Do not replay the point. If it happens on a first serve, play a second serve.
- **Lost track of the score-** Try to reconstruct points played in the game and use as your starting score. If you can't agree on the points, go back to the last score everyone agrees on, even if it means starting the game over. Make sure to stop the serve immediately if a disputed score is called out and play a let once score is resolved.
- **Teams did not switch ends** at the right time- as soon as the mistake is realized, correct ends and continue play. Service rotation continues as started.
- **Players received on wrong half of court-** Complete game as started, switch back to correct positions during next receiving game.
- **Wrong player on a team serves out of order-** If during a game, switch to correct server and play from current score. Points played stand. If the game is complete, it counts and the order of service remains as altered for set.

Interruptions/ Self- calls/ Hindrance

- **Ball on Court-** Safety is extremely important. Any player on the court can stop play if a ball comes from a neighboring court and is a visual distraction or a hazard for an injury. The court should play a let. Players on the neighboring court who hit the ball should not immediately call 'ball on' especially if it interrupts the point in play. (I.e. if the ball rolls to the back of the court.) When the affected court stops the point due to a ball on court, play a let.
- **Self-calls-** Double bounce, tipped ball, crossing over the net plane to make contact, touching the net with racquet or body or ball making contact with their body are self-calls by the player only. Do not stop play unless the player makes a self-call even if you disagree.
- **Hindrance-** Player must stop point immediately if truly 'hindered' in making a shot. You may not hit or make a play on the ball and then call hindrance. Loud noises that affect the outcome of a point may be a hindrance. (i.e. shouting right before the other team is about to make contact). Only an official can rule if grunting while hitting is a hindrance.
- **Warning your partner-** You have the right to warn your partner to get out of the way as soon as the ball comes off of your racquet and the ball is still on your half of the court. It cannot be disruptive to your opponent's play on the ball.
- **Service Let Calls-** May be called by any player on the court.
- **Foot Faults-** Foot fault must be obvious and at least one warning must be given. Foot fault point penalties may be called in officiated matches such as Sectionals events.

Assistance on Court/ Court Monitors (when and how)

- **Court Monitor:** Court monitor(s) may be called in to assist with the management of a match by any player and at any time. It can be requested if there is tension between players or in anticipation of potential problems. They should be positioned at each net post and each one is responsible for the court divided in half lengthwise. The players are still responsible for their calls but they may ask the court monitor on the near side (where the ball lands) for a ruling. The court monitor from the opposite side will not have the best perspective on seeing the ball. They should not make calls across lines. The court monitor can overrule clear mistakes only and only when asked. Decision of the Court Monitor is final.
Monitors are to remain impartial and not have conversations during the match or at changeovers. If no one is available, a match with conflict may wait for someone to assist or reschedule as a last resort.