

# 2026 Local Rules and Regulations

## GOVERNING RULES

USTA Adult leagues are divided into layers of organization: National, Sectional (Eastern), Regional (Northern), Local Area (Albany), 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 [2026 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 "[2025 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 League Committee.

It is expected that captains and players will treat coordinators with respect when communicating with them – whether in person, text and/or in e-mail. Respectful treatment of each other will add to an enjoyable league experience. Consequences such as suspension from league play may result if players deviate from this expectation. All captains and players shall keep in mind that their local league coordinators may not be available 24/7 to address concerns that arise outside of normal business hours.

### 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, Tri-Level and Mixed Division 18&Over, 40&Over and 55&Over) at each level of championship play, must participate.
2. In Northern, the maximum roster size for all leagues is 22 players. The Section 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, Mixed, 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 final match of the regular season.
  
7. Requests for a registration refund, credit or transfer to another team must be made by the league registration deadline. Only registrants who have not played any matches can be refunded, credited or transferred. Regardless of circumstance, no refunds or credits will be issued AFTER this deadline.
  
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 is 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
  - 18&Over 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5 = 5 courts
  - 40&Over = 4 courts
  - 55&Over = 3 courts
  - 65&Over = 3 courts
  - All Mixed = 3 courts
  - Tri-Level = 3 courts

2. Each League shall consist of a minimum of two (2) teams. All teams must play a minimum of five matches to be eligible for Championships. Note: In Adult Leagues, a minimum of 6 matches will be scheduled and need to be completed should any team need to play in order to qualify their players for postseason play.
  
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. NOTE: Players shall NOT play a full third set.
  
4. The team captain for each team shall exchange their team line-up simultaneously prior to the beginning of the team match. Prior to the start of the match when lineups are exchanged, if a singles or doubles player is missing that player(s) must be placed in the lowest singles or doubles position. Only players present and ready to play are to be put in the top positions of the lineup.

In the case of a staggered match, the player(s) receiving the default may move their defaulted player(s) to a lower position.

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. In Northern, only the 40&Over league will utilize a point system:

40&Over - 1 point per court

6. 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.

7. 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.
8. Defaults must occur from the bottom up. **Prior to the start of the match** when lineups are exchanged, if a singles or doubles player is missing that player(s) must be placed in the lowest singles or doubles position. If any player(s) are not present at the time that lineups are exchanged, those player(s) must be placed in the lowest singles and/or doubles positions. Only players present and ready to play are to be put in the top positions of the lineup.
9. The substitution of the name of a player listed in a default is allowed after the match is concluded only if the player being added was eligible to have been listed in that position on the date of the match. Any change requests MUST be made prior to the commencement of the next phase of league progression.
10. Cell phone use on the court is considered a deliberate potential hindrance. Turn off phones. Players may wear Smart watches for activity tracking only.
11. 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.
12. 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.**

13. 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.

14. Playing less than 3 courts (or 2 courts for Adult 2.5, 5.0, 55 & Over, 65 & Over, Tri-level, or Mixed) constitutes an invalid match. **Any matches that impact standings must be valid matches. Match Schedules are firm. If a team cannot field enough players to field a valid match, only the court(s) necessary to make the match valid will be rescheduled. All remaining court(s) will be scored as defaults. The team receiving the default(s) selects the remaining court(s) to be played.**

**Any team that creates an invalid match must play at least one court on the scheduled date in order to be eligible for advancement to post-season play.** A team that forfeits enough courts to create an invalid match 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. The Local League Coordinator has final discretion in rescheduling of matches.

15. Players are allowed one three-minute medical timeout as needed. If the injury involves bleeding, up to 10 minutes may be taken to stop the bleeding. Players are also only allowed one bathroom break per match if needed.

16. 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.

17. All matches played in good faith stand as played. Teams are expected to compete to win.

## 18. USTA EASTERN: TIMED MATCH PROCEDURE

n/a

19. RAIN RULE Rained-out matches should be rescheduled as soon as possible. When the 24-hour forecast is such that it is very likely that an outdoor match will be rained out, the home captain will make every attempt to secure indoor facilities for the same day as the originally scheduled match. If there are courts available inside on the date and time (within two hours) of the original match, the match must be played on that originally scheduled date. If rescheduling indoors is not an option and it is raining or rain is threatening on match day, 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). On match day, the two captains or their designated captains MUST contact each other at least five hours before the start of the match if the weather looks problematic. 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 you designate a sub, you MUST inform that week's opposing captain and provide him/her the sub's name and cell phone number 48 hours before the match.

Rescheduling rainouts when no indoor courts are available: Within 48 hours of the originally scheduled match, the home team must supply the away team with three dates they are available for a reschedule and work from there to determine a reschedule date. The two captains must agree on a new date within seven days and notify their league coordinator so that he/she can update TennisLink. If they are unable to agree, the league coordinator will set a date. Piecemealing, with each court making their own arrangements, the makeup match may only be done when both captains agree to this method.

If a match is in progress and must be suspended, 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, once determined.

In the event of rain and a subsequent full match reschedule, any court previously defaulted must be rescheduled and played.

20. DARKNESS RULE: On outdoor unlit courts, play must continue until (and no later than) the designated match end time which is as follows:-
- April and May 8 pm
  - June and July 8:30 pm
  - August 8 pm
21. Players are prohibited from leaving the court in the last 15 minutes of a timed match. Should a player leave the court during this time, it will be considered a retirement. Note: Even if a player left prior to the last 15 minutes, if they have not returned within that last 15 minutes, they will be retired from the match.
22. 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, Valid Computer Rated Appealed-Down Players **and players who have been disqualified (DQ)/ promoted** 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. Players who appeal up use the same advancement criteria as Computer-Rated Players.

**All Self-Rated and Valid Computer Rated Appealed-Down Players including DQ/promoted 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 including DQ/promoted 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. Any player promoted or DQ'd, is still considered a self rate and must abide by the self rate criteria outlined for eligibility purposes.

Any Mixed ("M") rated players are considered computer ("C") rated players for the mixed doubles leagues only and are subject to the same eligibility criteria as C rated players. Keep in mind that M rated players will be required to self-rate should they wish to play in any adult league, at which time they shall be subject to the eligibility criteria for self ("S") rated players.

### 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
DQ/Promoted	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

**2. 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 **regional or sectional championship** should more than one team qualify to advance. This declaration is done by playing in a regional or sectional championship match, once a player plays in said championship match they are bound to that team until that team is eliminated. 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 reselect and play for any other team, in any regional or sectional championship that has not started, as long as they meet eligibility requirements for that team, regardless of region.

3. If two teams are scheduled for the same championships and share more than 5 Rostered 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. If the two teams have different captains and cannot agree which team will advance, the determination will be done via a coin flip by USTA Eastern Adult League staff. The league coordinator shall be notified no later than 24 hours following the conclusion of the deciding match.
  
4. If a team has at least 4 players on their Eastern championship roster that are scheduled at the same time for a local match in another **Eastern** league, the local match will be rescheduled if requested.
  
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
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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

Information about Local Championships will be communicated with captains.

7. All local league play and local/regional championships must be completed 12 days (Sunday of the week two weeks before the sectional) prior to the start of that league's sectional championship. Players must register via the Eastern Section registration link. Teams must confirm their participation within 48 hours of their determining match or an alternate team will be selected. The minimum number of players necessary to compete in the championship must be registered one week prior to the first scheduled day of championship play.

8. Should a team drop out of the sectional championship within one week of the start of play, no refunds will be issued.

9. All teams competing at Sectional Championship events must play all scheduled matches with no defaults; penalties may be assessed if teams do not comply. If a team defaults a court at the start of a Sectional Championship, that line will be scored as a default for the full weekend and the captain may have penalties assessed against them.

Single court defaults in the final round against teams in contention may result in a grievance against the player and captain as it can affect the overall outcome. Teams are expected to play all matches, even once the championship is determined unless both teams agree not to play all courts. Failure to do so will result in a penalty.

10. For Tri-Level leagues attending the National Invitational in March 2026, no more than **3 players who were on the roster of any team that advanced to, or qualified for, any National Championship team the previous year may play together in the same level of tri-level team** (e.g. no more than 3 players who were on the same 4.5 Tri-Level team can be on the same 4.5 Tri-Level team, but this team would be allowed to have as many players as they want on either a 4.0 Tri-Level or 5.0 Tri-Level team).

11. For 55 & Over Mixed and 65 & Over, teams participating in the National Invitational in early 2026 must break up as follows (with at least 4 players from the winning team being allowed to stay together):

- If the local league had 2 teams, no more than 50% of the players can be on any one team
- If the local league had 3 teams, no more than 33% of the players can be on any one team
- If the local league had 4 teams, no more than 25% of the players can be on any one team
- If the local league had 5 teams, no more than 20% of the players can be on any one team.

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

1. A person may only captain one team per NTRP level in each division, age group and local league season. A captain, even if club personnel, may not captain or complete the responsibilities for a second team within the same age group and NTRP level in the same local league.
2. Puppet captains/captains in name only will not be allowed. A player on the team must be listed as the captain or the co-captain, coaches and/or club staff may be listed as either the captain or co-captain, but not both. The playing captain, not club staff (including coaches), must be the main point of contact with both the opposing captains and with league administration.
3. Captains are expected to exhibit the highest levels of sportsmanship and should conduct the administration of their team in a fair and appropriate manner. Captains are expected to fulfill all financial obligations required for USTA League participation on behalf of their team.
4. Both home & visiting captains should make contact at least 5 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 staggered start times, dress code required by the home site, as well as the court type to be played on.
5. Each team must have a captain or acting captain, familiar with local league rules, present at every match. The captains, or their designees, must fill out the scorecard, exchange the cards simultaneously prior to the match start time and record the scores as each match finishes.
6. In the event a court needs to be defaulted, the opposing captain must be contacted **24 hours in advance of the facility or club's CANCELLATION POLICY deadline.** 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.
7. In the event a court is defaulted due to lateness by the visiting 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.

8. Captains shall be present at every match or assign someone to be acting captain.
9. Complete your line-up 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.**
10. **Both team captains are responsible for inputting scores into TennisLink within 48 hours** unless the local league coordinator requires a shorter time period to determine end of season standings. 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.
11. The home team must supply a new unopened container of USTA approved balls for each individual match.
12. 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.
13. 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 #2 singles and #1 doubles, followed by #2 doubles 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.
14. 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, two monitors are suggested.

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.

15. 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 needed to make it a valid match shall be rescheduled. In order for the defaulting team to advance to post-season play, at least ONE court of each match MUST be played on the scheduled date of the match.
16. The Local 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.
17. **Teams must participate through a facility within the Section unless prior approval has been authorized by SLC and Adult League Committee Chair. No matches or make-up courts may be played outside the USTA Eastern geographic boundaries.**
18. Captains have 72 hours 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 home team. 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.
19. [Click Here](#) to View Facility Rates, Cancellation Policies, and Facility Notes for 2026 (Updated seasonally).

### **Administrative Processes:**

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

**There is a non-refundable \$50 fee to file a grievance and a non-refundable \$75 fee to file an appeal of the grievance decision.**

#### **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. If players appeal their rating and it is granted, they must immediately begin playing at their new level.

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 Self-Rated 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 by the team captain or co-captain 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](#).