

Frequently Asked Questions: Tennis Officials

- **What is a tennis official?**
 - A person who helps ensure that any given tennis match is conducted under the fairest possible conditions. So, ideally, the official is “a friend at court,” helpful to the players and the spectators.
- **Why should I be a tennis official?**

Because you:

 - Love the game,
 - Have a keen interest in seeing that it is played under the best conditions, and
 - Enjoy having first-hand contact with it whereby you can make a useful contribution to the game, beyond what you may do or have done as a player
- **How do I become a tennis official?**
 - Be an active USTA member
 - Complete the “Safe Play Training” and background check on the usta.com web site. Go to “About USTA” and follow the link for “Officials”. Then click on “Becoming an Official” followed by “Start Officiating”.
 - Take and pass a series of training modules available at the usta.com web site. Found by following the same links as for “Safe Play Training”.
 - Request and obtain a Nucula account. Access to Nucula is on the usta.com web site under Officiating Resources – Nucula Portal.
 - Have corrected 20-20 vision. A doctor must certify this every 2 years (with an exam in odd years for certification in even years).
 - Contact your District Chair of Officials to learn about shadowing / training opportunities.
- **What is the reference book for officials?**
 - *Friend at Court*, accessible online at the usta.com web site under Officiating Resources
- **Do I get paid, or is this volunteer work?**
 - Payment for each tournament is determined independently. Your chief umpire or referee will know the pay rate. Some tournaments are staffed with volunteers, for example a wheelchair tournament. While in training, you may be unpaid, or paid but at a lower rate than when fully certified.
 - Most officials have another income besides officiating.
- **Where do I get my uniform?**
 - Some professional tournaments provide special uniforms. For all other tournaments, you should wear the USTA official’s sanctioned shirt. It is available at <https://www.sandhuniforms.com/store/ustaofficials>
 - Proper attire is the official USTA shirt tucked into khaki pants or shorts, a brown or tan belt, white socks and mostly white tennis shoes.
 - All outer wear must have no logo other than the new USTA logo.
- **Do I qualify to just work local tournaments?**
 - You are eligible to work any tournament in the United States. You must contact the chief umpire for each tournament. Do not attend unless notified that you have been selected to work.
- **How often must I work?**
 - You may work as much or as little as your availability allows. Of course, to advance in your officiating capabilities, you should work as much as possible.
- **What should I bring to each match?**
 - You should bring a stopwatch, tape measure, a flipping coin and a small notebook to keep notes. A stopwatch separate from the one available on your wristwatch is required.
 - Most tournaments will provide food if you work through a normal meal time. In other cases, you must provide your own food.

- **What are my tax consequences?**
 - You are an independent contractor. You will declare this as self-employment income and you may need to pay state and federal income taxes as well as social security self-employment tax.
- **How do I become eligible for college matches and tournaments?**
 - The Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) maintains its own training and certification process for tennis officials. However, a prerequisite for ITA certification is certification as a USTA official. Visit the itatennis.com web site for more information.
 - Each district may have its own schedulers for college matches. Check with your District Chair of Officials.
- **How do I become eligible for professional tournaments?**
 - To become a line umpire at a professional event, one must attend a line umpire clinic at specified Challenger, Futures or Satellite tournaments throughout the country.
 - You must attend at your own expense. If the training session is successful, you may be asked to stay and work part of the qualifier or the main draw. By working this event, you will acquire work history which may allow you to apply for later events during the year.
- **How do I advance in the officiating ranks?**
 - Each year, officials are evaluated at various events when a Trainer/Evaluator is present. If your evaluation at the event is better than expected, then you are allowed to progress to the next level. Officials should work events with a trainer evaluator present if they wish to advance quickly in the officiating ranks. However, bad visibility or poor evaluation is worse than no evaluation when attempting to advance.
- **How do I get to work at the US Open?**
 - The officials who work the US Open are selected from a large pool of officials who apply. They all need to have prior experience working professional lines. The US Open staff list is selected from among the best-qualified applicants.