



# Junior Know the Rules -- 10 and Under Tennis

## Overview

The Texas 10 and Under system, aligned with the 10 and Under rules for USTA National and the International Tennis Federation, became effective January 1, 2012, with minor modifications implemented January 1, 2016. It is the Junior Tennis Council's position that the 10 and Under Division is a developmental division with the focus being on participation and developing competitive skills through match play. The 10 and Under system promotes play in both orange ball and green ball events and is structured to keep young players in orange ball and green ball events long enough to develop tactically and technically. A young player who is technically advanced and physically competent will be able to progress through the levels in a reasonable time period.

### 1. Orange Ball Division

#### a. Eligibility

- i. The minimum age eligibility is the first day of the month of the player's seventh birthday.
- ii. A player may elect to move to the Green Ball Division prior to the last six months of age eligibility by earning a combination of twenty stars and/or trophies:
  1. Two Stars are earned by completing a Challenger 1-Day (10s), a Participation Credit 1-Day (10s), or a Youth Progression Tournament outside USTA Texas.
    - a. A player may only earn stars at one tournament per month, either in a Challenger 1-Day (10s), a Participation Credit 1-Day (10s), or a Youth Progression Tournament outside of USTA Texas.
    - b. A player may only compete in one Challenger 1-Day (10s) or Participation Credit 1-Day (10s) per month, but not both.
  2. Three stars are earned by completing a USTA Junior Team Tennis league season in a 10s division and meeting the requirements established by the Junior Team Tennis Committee.
    - a. A player is limited to three stars per Junior Team Tennis league season and a maximum of two league seasons per year.
    - b. A player will earn stars for the division in which he/she is eligible. For example, if a player participates on a Green Ball Junior Team Tennis team but is classified as an Orange Ball Youth Progression player, then he/she will receive Orange Ball stars.
    - c. Stars will be posted at the end of the league season.
  3. Two trophies are earned by winning a Challenger 1-Day (10s).
  4. One trophy is earned by the finalist of a Challenger 1-Day (10s).
- iii. A player will be placed into the Orange Ball Division A Draw once the player has earned two trophies in the Orange Ball Division. If an Orange Ball Division A Draw cannot be made with a minimum of four players, then all players will be placed in one draw.
- iv. Once a player earns twenty stars and/or trophies, he/she will become eligible for the next division after the automated calculation and publish date. When a player becomes eligible for another division, he/she will start at zero (0) stars and trophies in the new division.
- v. During the last six months of age eligibility in the 10s division, a player must move to the Green Ball Division if the other criteria are not met. If a player is within the last six months of age eligibility but has not participated in a Challenger 1-Day (10s) or a Participation Credit 1-Day (10s), he/she may not be eligible to play in the Green Ball Division in any sanctioned tournament. This player may be required to play one Challenger 1-Day (10s) or Participation Credit 1-Day (10s) in the Orange Ball Division or have a waiting period after notifying the USTA Texas office. A player who chooses to enter an "other" tournament may have to play multiple Orange Ball tournaments while waiting for the automated calculation.

b. Match Format

- i. Matches will be played in accordance with all six Orange Ball Tennis elements:
  1. Court size: 60-foot court
  2. Racquet length: no longer than 25 inches
  3. Net Height: 3 feet at center; 3 feet, 6 inches at net posts
  4. Ball: orange dot low compression balls
  5. Age: 7 to 10 ½
  6. Scoring: 2 out of 3, 4-game sets (first to win 4 games by a margin of 1 game) using no-ad scoring; 7-point tiebreak in lieu of 3<sup>rd</sup> set (first to win 7 points by a margin of 2).
- ii. A player may serve overhand or underhand but must hit the ball with the racquet before the ball hits the ground.
- iii. The USTA Point Penalty System along with the USTA Junior Suspension Point System will be utilized in all 10 and Under divisions.

**Rationale:** *The Junior Tennis Council emphasizes that this is not a “race” to the Green Ball Division. The priority is on maximizing participation and playing matches with the orange ball. Please note that a player may elect to move to the Green Ball Division early if they satisfy the criteria, but they are not required until the player is 10 ½ years old. Players are required to move to the Green Ball Division at 10 ½ years of age because the Green Ball Division is a critical transition step for young players. Finally, the Junior Tennis Council placed a minimum age for participation in the 10 and Under Division to prevent very young players from being pushed into the competitive arena too early. Players younger than seven can take advantage of USTA Junior Team Tennis and USTA Texas Future Stars Tournaments and play the 8s Red Ball Division.*

**2. Green Ball Division**

a. Eligibility

- i. A player will be eligible to play the Green Ball Division until the first day of the month of the player’s eleventh birthday.
- ii. In order to move to the Challenger (12s-18s) level (Yellow Ball) prior to the month of eleventh birthday, a player must meet **both** of the following criteria:
  1. Must be at least nine years old.
  2. Earn a combination of twenty stars and/or trophies:
    - a. Two stars are earned by completing a Challenger 1-Day (10s), a Participation Credit 1-Day (10s), or a Youth Progression Tournament outside USTA Texas.
      - i. A player may only earn stars at one tournament per month, either in a Challenger 1-Day (10s), a Participation Credit 1-Day (10s), or a Youth Progression Tournament outside of USTA Texas.
      - ii. A player may only compete in one Challenger 1-Day (10s) or Participation Credit 1-Day (10s) per month, but not both.
    - b. Three stars are earned by completing a USTA Junior Team Tennis league season in a 10s division and meeting the requirements established by the Junior Team Tennis Committee.
      - i. A player is limited to three stars per Junior Team Tennis league season and a maximum of two league seasons per year.
      - ii. A player will earn stars for the division in which he/she is eligible. For example, if a player participates on a Green Ball Junior Team Tennis team but is classified as an Orange Ball Youth Progression player, then he/she will receive Orange Ball stars.
    - c. Stars will be posted at the end of the league season.
    - d. Two trophies are earned by winning a Challenger 1-Day (10s).
    - e. One trophy is earned by the finalist of a Challenger 1-Day (10s).
- iii. When a player (regardless of age) wins four Challenger 1-Day (10s) in the Green Ball Division, he/she must move to the 12s Championship level when playing 12s. The player remains eligible for the Green Ball Division until the first day of the month of the player’s eleventh birthday except if the player advances to the 12s Championship level through 12s.
  - a. A player will be placed into the Green Ball Division A Draw once the player has earned two trophies in the Green Ball Division. If a Green Ball Division A Draw cannot be made with a minimum of four players, then all players will be placed in one draw.

- iv. Once a player earns twenty stars and/or trophies, he/she will become eligible for the next division after the automated calculation and publish date. When a player becomes eligible for another division, he/she will start at zero (0) stars and trophies in the new division.
  - v. A player is not permitted to participate in a Challenger 1-Day (10s)/Participation Credit 1-Day (10s) and a Challenger 2-Day (12s-18s), a Challenger 1-Day (12s-18s), a Championship Major Zone, or a Super Championship Major Zone in the same month.
- b. Match Format
- i. Matches will be played in accordance with all six Green Ball Tennis elements:
    - 1. Court size: 78-foot court
    - 2. Racquet length: no longer than 29 inches
    - 3. Net Height: 3 feet at center; 3 feet, 6 inches at net posts
    - 4. Ball: green dot low compression balls
    - 5. Age: 7 to 11
    - 6. Scoring: 2 out of 3, 4-game sets (first to win 4 games by a margin of 1 game) using no-ad scoring; 7-point tiebreak in lieu of 3<sup>rd</sup> set (first to win 7 points by a margin of 2).
  - ii. A player may serve overhand or underhand but must hit the ball with the racquet before the ball hits the ground.
  - iii. The USTA Point Penalty System along with the USTA Junior Suspension Point System will be utilized in all 10 and Under divisions.

**Rationale:** Using green low compression balls on a full-sized court will allow players to construct points and use appropriate technique.

### 3. Tournament Format for Challenger 1-Day (10s)/Participation Credit 1-Day (10s) Orange Ball and Challenger 1-Day (10s)/Participation Credit 1-Day (10s) Green Ball Divisions

- a. No ranking lists will be published, and Orange and Green Ball Divisions will not be seeded in tournaments.
- b. The Orange and Green Ball Divisions will be completed in one day. To increase the number of matches and ensure that the Challenger 1-Day (10s)/Participation Credit 1-Day (10s) finish in one day, the following criteria will be followed:
  - i. If nine or more players register for a division, then players will be placed into draws of 16. First round loser consolation will be offered to guarantee players at least two matches. Consolation rounds will be determined using the "First Off" method.
  - ii. If six to eight players register for a division, then players will be split evenly into flights for round robin match play. Inter-flight play will occur with the winners of each flight playing each other, the second place finishers playing each other, and so on. The first place playoff will determine the winner of the Challenger 1-Day (10s)/Participation Credit 1-Day (10s).
  - iii. If three to five players register for a division, then a round robin format will be used; or other approved format.
  - iv. If less than three players register for a division, genders will be combined to complete the draw.

**Rationale:** The Challenger 1-Day (10s)/Participation Credit 1-Day (10s) structure will expose players to as many orange or green ball matches as possible in a one day format. Stars can be earned in tournament play through Challenger 1-Day (10s), Participation Credit 1-Day (10s), or Youth Progression Tournaments outside USTA Texas.

### 4. Tournament Format for "Other" Tournaments

- a. Orange and Green Ball Divisions will be offered (8s Red Ball Divisions may be offered) and completed in one day. The divisions will not be seeded.
- b. The match format for the 10 and Under Divisions will be consistent with the match format played in the Challenger 1-Day (10s)/Participation Credit 1-Day (10s); or other approved match format.
- c. The match format for the Red Ball Divisions will be played in accordance with all six Red Ball Tennis elements:
  - 1. Court size: 36-foot court
  - 2. Racquet length: no longer than 23 inches
  - 3. Net height: 2 feet 9 inches
  - 4. Ball: red low compression balls
  - 5. Age: 8 & Under
  - 6. Scoring: 2 out of 3, 7-point tiebreak games (first to win 7 points by a margin of 2).  
Players shall change ends after each tiebreak game; or other approved scoring format.
- i. A player may serve overhand or underhand but must hit the ball with the racquet before the ball hits the ground.

- d. To increase the number of matches and ensure that the “other” tournaments finish in one day, the following criteria will be followed (Red Ball Divisions may vary):
  - i. If five or more players register for a division, the players will be placed into draws of 16. First match loser consolation will be offered to guarantee players at least two matches.
  - ii. If three or four players register for a division, then a round robin format will be played.
  - iii. If less than three players register for a division, genders will be combined to complete the draw; and if combining is not possible, the division will not be held.
  - iv. All Future Stars Tournament draws will be a round robin, non-elimination format
- e. No stars or trophies towards advancement can be earned playing “other” tournaments.

***Rationale:*** *An important aspect of the 10 and Under Division is the length of time spent in each division. Since players are limited to a maximum of two stars and two trophies per month, “others” provide additional valuable match play experience.*

### **Conclusion**

The Texas 10 and Under system integrates USTA rule changes for the 10 and Under Tennis initiative, preserves the integrity of orange ball events, emphasizes participation and experience, and focuses on the development of young tennis players. The Texas 12s-18s system requires qualification from the Challenger level to the Championship level and from the Championship level to the Super Championship level. The 10 and Under system remains consistent with this structure by requiring a level of qualification to advance from Orange Ball to Green Ball and from Green Ball to Challenger 1-Day (12s-18s)/Challenger 2-Day (12s-18s) or 12s Champs.