



Guidance for Tennis Coaches in England

COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

Version 5.2 – Published 23 September 2020



TENNIS
FOR BRITAIN

COVID-19 SECURE 'PLAY SAFE' GUIDELINES - RETURN TO PLAY

These COVID-19 guidelines apply to England only. They have been produced in line with Government announcements on the easing of lockdown restrictions, and the subsequent Government guidance on [gatherings, public spaces, and outdoor activities](#), the [phased return of outdoor sport and recreation](#) and for [providers of out of school settings](#) published on Gov.uk.

Alongside these guidelines, coaches should read updated information published by [Sport England](#) and the [Government guidance for personal trainers and coaches](#).

Guidelines for playing tennis in Scotland can be read [here](#) and for Wales, [here](#).

INTRODUCTION

We know tennis coaches are keen to offer a full range of sessions for customers as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so. By its very nature, tennis is an activity whereby close person to person contact can be avoided, with the Government saying tennis is a good example of an activity that can be undertaken in a way compliant with social distancing restrictions.

Based on our continued discussions with Government and following the further easing of restrictions, the LTA has developed this updated set of practical guidelines for coaches to follow so that tennis can be played in England, where the local environment allows.

We have indicated the key additions and updates to these guidelines for Version 5 of this document with [NEW] and [UPDATED] on the following pages.

These guidelines apply to both tennis and padel, and outline adaptations and considerations so that tennis activity can be enjoyed in a way that is in line with Government advice and helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They include measures to maintain hygiene and minimise unnecessary interactions with others.

As lockdown restrictions evolve, the LTA's guidance, in line with Government legislation and guidance, will shift in focus to ensuring that venues and coaches can provide COVID-19 secure environments, recognising the different operating contexts that organisations face.

Coaches and coaching providers across the country are all different and operate in different local contexts. Making an assessment of whether a safe exercise environment can be provided depends on a range of factors, which apply differently at each venue. It is the responsibility of each tennis provider, coach and facility to make that assessment based on their local environment.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the guidelines for players and venues, and all elements of the guidelines should be considered to ensure activity can be delivered safely.

Should you have any questions, [please refer to the FAQs on the LTA website](#).

GUIDELINES FOR TENNIS COACHES

IMPORTANT: Where a local lockdown is in place alternative measures and guidelines may be in place – coaches in these areas are advised to check our main coronavirus information page at www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus before playing.

COACHING ACTIVITY

- All activity should be consistent with the government guidance regarding health, travel, social distancing and hygiene at all times
- Coaches and coaching organisations must consider safety first, particularly minimising the risk of infection/transmission. A thorough risk assessment must be undertaken (or updated if one previously completed), and appropriate measures put in place to ensure participants, staff and volunteers are protected - you are advised to liaise with your venue when doing this. A risk assessment template is available from the COVID-19 section of the venue [Resource Library](#) on the LTA website. For larger group activity and in line with [Government guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity events](#), venues should consider transmission risk based on three variables: droplet transmission and aerosol generation; fomite transmission; and population.
- Coaches who have had their normal activity disrupted and have a need to coach outside of their normal venue, should seek prior permission from the venue, local authority or operator who is in charge of the tennis facility, before undertaking coaching
- Guidelines will be updated as we progress through the different phases of Government measures – the LTA remains in discussions with Government and so we recommend you check the official LTA position at www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus on a regular basis to stay abreast of the latest recommendations
- Any measures coaches put in place to enable tennis activity to resume need to be capable of being flexed or changed quickly if tighter social distancing is reintroduced in the future or when the restrictions are further relaxed.
- The guidance set out for coaches is applicable to both outdoor tennis venues and indoor tennis venues that follow COVID-19 secure guidance. Coaches should continue to work closely with the venues at which they are delivering activity, to ensure that all activity is COVID-19 secure

ORGANISED GROUP SESSIONS

- **IMPORTANT:** While informal social play group size is limited to a maximum of six people by law, the government has confirmed that **organised activity for larger groups, including coached sessions, club nights and competitions, is permitted** as [an exception to the limit of six](#). This is provided the activity is in accordance with the COVID-19 Secure guidelines published by the LTA for venues, coaches, players and competitions.
- The Government has made it clear that organised larger group tennis activity is only permitted where this is the case

- **[NEW] Organised group activity is defined as being activity organised by a national governing body, club, registered instructor/coach, business or charity, where in all cases organiser must conduct a risk assessment and take all reasonable steps to limit transmission of the coronavirus by reference to that risk assessment and all relevant COVID-19 Secure guidance.** Further details are provided on the [Government website](#)
- **[NEW]** There are additional restrictions for indoor group tennis activity for adults. While from Thursday 24 September, indoor team sports are now subject to the rule of six, for tennis, activity can continue for children, and organised indoor group tennis activity for adults (including coached sessions and club nights held indoors) can take place in larger numbers in COVID-19 secure venues, provided sub-groups of more than six do not mix. Sub-groups relate to participants only and do not include coaches. There is an exemption for activity for disabled people, which can take place in any number
- **[NEW]** When participating in any tennis activity indoors or outdoors, **participants must not mingle in groups of more than six before and after the activity**, while maintaining social distancing with those from another household at all times. If an organiser is not able to ensure this (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such events should not take place. Attendees must avoid social interaction with anyone outside the group they are with, even if they see other people they know, at all times during their visit

COACHING CHILDREN

- Coached sessions for children can take place indoors or outdoors, but should be limited to group sizes of no more than 15, plus coach(es) in accordance with the Department for Education's [guidance for providers of out-of-school settings](#)
- Coaching activity such as Summer Camps that have two or more groups are permitted as long as the groups are kept completely separate and the sessions are delivered independently of each other. Clear instructions should be provided to participants in advance so that they know which coach and which court to report to, if there are two or more groups
- Larger group sessions may need to utilise multiple full-size courts in order to maintain social distancing, depending on the local environment and risk assessment – where space and number of courts available is limited, then based on your risk assessment only smaller group sessions may be possible. Coaches can also refer to the [LTA's recommended coach:player ratios](#) for more general non-COVID-19 guidance in this area.
- **[UPDATED]** The LTA recommends no more than 12 players on one full-size tennis court and surrounding areas/run-off space at any one time if undertaking tennis coaching, in order to ensure social distancing can be maintained at all times. This limit is most applicable for red stage tennis or younger children (tots), and it applies both indoors and outdoors
- Red court specific guidance: Consider using a safe barrier between red courts (e.g. line of cones, strips or barrier tape) and use spots/ground markers to facilitate children maintaining social distancing as part of the session organisation.
- If you feel your youngest groups would be unable to reasonably maintain social distancing, consider a) prioritising sessions with older children first for commencement, b) reducing number of red courts per full sized adult court, c) adding an assistant to help organisation or d) reducing number of participants in a group

- Guardian (non-participant) or carer attendance is permitted and is not counted as part of the maximum group size, but should be off court and limited to one per child where possible, with social distancing observed while watching the session

COACHING ADULTS

- Coached sessions for adults may take place indoors and outdoors for venues and coaches that are COVID-19 secure, in line with Government [guidance on organising outdoor sport and physical activity events](#) and for [providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities](#)
- The Government has made clear that businesses and venues following COVID-19 secure guidance can host larger groups. This is also the case for events in public outdoor spaces that are organised by businesses, provided they take reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of transmission in line with COVID-19 secure guidance and including completion of a risk assessment.
- Larger group sessions are likely to need to utilise multiple full-size courts in order to maintain social distancing, depending on the local environment and risk assessment – where space and number of courts available is limited, then based on your risk assessment only smaller group sessions may be possible. Coaches should also refer to the [LTA's recommended coach:player ratios](#) for more general non-COVID-19 guidance in this area.
- **[UPDATED]** The LTA recommends no more than 12 players on one full-size tennis court and surrounding areas at any one time (**for adult activity indoors, this limit is six people**), in order to ensure social distancing can be maintained at all times. Most adult tennis sessions will have far less than this number per court.
- Depending on your risk assessment, some activity that might ordinarily be delivered in larger groups (such as Cardio Tennis), might still need to continue in smaller groups for now, to ensure the safety of participants.
- You can meet with different clients/groups in a single day as long as you are maintaining social distancing

COACHING DISABILITY TENNIS **[NEW]**

- To support the resumption of the LTA's Open Court disability tennis programme, we have produced additional detailed tennis specific guidance for coaches running inclusive and disability-specific activity
- Although activity levels were at a record high prior to COVID-19, participation of disabled people in sport has been greatly impacted by coronavirus – running inclusive and disability-specific tennis activity is therefore particularly encouraged
- Be aware that disabled people as a group have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, and so there may be increased concern and anxiety about returning to play. If not already done, coaches should consider reaching out disabled players yet to return and finding out how people are, as well as discuss what their intention is for returning to tennis
- LTA survey data shows that while an increasing number of disabled people are now returning to the court and are excited and happy to return to tennis, a large proportion say they are playing less now than they have been in the past. Nearly half feel uncertain or negative around their own safety and anxious about returning

- Coaches should ensure details of how they will run sessions are updated and clear for disabled people, and involve them in the solutions to ensure the session is COVID safe, for everyone
- Communication is crucial, and coaches should continue to promote the hygiene and coronavirus safety measures you have in place to help reassure disabled players about their return.

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS [NEW]

- Player/coach using a tennis wheelchair for activity should be either:
 - Able to transfer themselves from their day chair into a tennis wheelchair
 - A person from their household or bubble can transfer the player from a day chair into a tennis wheelchair. This person should remain available throughout the session in case of an emergency or toilet break, if required support is needed
- Tennis wheelchairs owned by the venue should be sanitised pre and post activity. This should be conducted by a nominated member of staff, using appropriate PPE
- A person accessing a sports wheelchair owned by the venue should only use the tennis wheelchair that has been assigned to them, no swapping of wheelchairs mid-session should be allowed

VI TENNIS [NEW]

- If verbal guiding is not appropriate, and the player doesn't have appropriate support from someone from their household/bubble, then guiding people with sight loss for coached sessions can take place as long as both the guide and visually impaired player follow the mitigations outlined below:
 - Both people to wash hands or sanitise immediately before and after guiding
 - Both people wear a face covering
 - Use a tennis racket as a guiding aid, between the player and the guider. Player to hold grip end of the racket; guider to use head end of the racket
 - Volunteers that are supporting players with sight loss should stay with the assigned player for the duration of the activity. Volunteers should not mix with other players to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus

PRE-ATTENDANCE SYMPTOM CHECK

- All coaches and participants in your sessions should undergo a pre-attendance self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms [using the information on the NHS website](#) before leaving home.
- No-one should leave home to participate in tennis if they, or someone they live with, has symptoms of COVID -19, currently recognised as any of:
 - A high temperature
 - A new, continuous cough
 - A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste
- Should an individual have demonstrated any such symptoms, they must follow [NHS and PHE guidance on self-isolation](#)

NHS TEST & TRACE

- If a player you have coached develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should be directed to follow the Government's 'test and trace' guidelines, which can be read on the [Gov.uk](#) website

- To support NHS Test and Trace, coaches should keep a temporary record of your customers and visitors for 21 days, in a way that is manageable for your business, and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed

MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Social distancing between players, and between the coach and players should be maintained at all times - the latest Government advice on staying alert and safe (social distancing) which can be read [here](#)
- Coaches should ensure this is emphasised to participants at the start of each session, and that they are clear on how they should maintain social distancing for each drill before starting it
- Adaptations to drills and how you provide feedback/instruction will be needed to ensure social distancing guidelines can be safely adhered to. The LTA has provided guidance as to how adaptations to LTA Youth Tennis for Kids drills can be made in [the LTA's coach secure area](#). Adult programmes such as Cardio Tennis, may need some adaptations to ensure social distancing can be maintained, depending on considerations around venue and other general guidance.
- Coaches should encourage players to avoid running down balls within an exercise if it could compromise social distancing
- Attendees should be advised to limit their interactions with anyone outside of the group they are attending the venue with (e.g. players on another court or in a different coaching group)

HEALTH, SAFETY & HYGIENE

- Ensure usual access to first aid and emergency equipment is maintained
- Guidance on delivering first aid during the coronavirus pandemic is available on the [St John Ambulance website](#)
- Further information for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting is available on the [Government website](#)
- Hand hygiene is imperative - hand sanitise at intervals if you have to touch communal surfaces
- Avoid touching your face
- If you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve

EQUIPMENT

- Coaches do not need to use new or fresh tennis balls for each lesson, and are no longer advised to be the only person to touch the tennis balls
- Where new or fresh balls aren't used or where players handle tennis balls as well as the coach, then extra care must be taken to ensure the coach and players do not touch your faces during play, and you should all clean your hands before the session and immediately after finishing (use alcohol gel if required)
- Players should bring their own equipment where possible and sharing of equipment should be limited – however, use of communal rackets can be done subject to thorough cleaning processes between uses
- Any coaching equipment used (e.g. cones) should be wiped down and cleaned rigorously afterwards
- Ensure all equipment is removed from the court at the end of the session

BOOKINGS & PAYMENT

- Operate online booking for coaching sessions where at all possible, or alternatively phone bookings
- Take any payments online, and avoid handling cash
- There is now no need to have a buffer period between session booking slots, but coaches should still consider what appropriate measures can be implemented to allow participants to enter and leave the courts safely
- Depending on the set up of the venue, this may still involve finishing sessions slightly early to allow time for players to leave before the next players arrive – **this is particularly the case for session that involve larger groups**

COMMUNICATION & VENUE LIAISON

- Coaches should liaise with the venue to ensure an agreed approach to activity that is feasible to deliver safely, and explore how coaches can be supported to deliver sessions
- Coaches should make customers aware in advance that undertaking any activity, including tennis, has the potential for increased risk of transmission of COVID-19, and advise attendees to read the [Government's guidance on staying safe outside your home](#)
- Communicate with your customers clearly and regularly, making them aware in advance of the measures you are putting in place for your sessions, and guidelines they should follow when attending
- Clear instructions should be provided to participants ahead of the session so that they know which coach and which court to report to

ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS

The [Department for Education recently unveiled its plan](#) for all pupils, in all year groups to return to school, full time, from the beginning of the Autumn Term.

The following extract from their guidance relates specifically to physical education and school sport:

“Schools have the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided whilst following the measures in their system of controls. Pupils should be kept in consistent groups, sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups, and contact sports avoided.

Outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not, maximising distancing between pupils and paying scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene. This is particularly important in a sports setting because of the way in which people breathe during exercise. External facilities can also be used in line with government guidance for the use of, and travel to and from, those facilities.

Schools are able to work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extra-curricular activities where they are satisfied that this is safe to do so. Schools should consider carefully how such arrangements can operate within their wider protective measures.”

Guidance for Schools

- As the Department for Education does, the LTA encourages schools to refer to advice from [the Association for Physical Education](#) (afPE) and [the Youth Sport Trust](#).
- afPE's guidance provides a self-review tool around nine areas including: protective measures and hygiene, teaching areas and self-distancing within lessons. The LTA would encourage schools to use this tool to plan and prepare for any physical education or school sport activity.

LTA Youth Schools Teacher Training

- LTA Youth Schools teacher training courses will become available again when wider guidelines allow, but only where there is local demand, recognising schools will have other priorities in the short term. However, we will fully and proactively re-launch the programme in early 2021
- Access to all the digital resources from this new programme remain freely available to schools via: www.lta.org.uk/schools and to coaches via the Coach Secure Area.

Coach Communication to Schools

- Given the above, the LTA's guidance for coaches has been updated to advise that proactive communication and approaches to schools can now take place.
- However, whilst the relaxation of restrictions is hugely positive for PE and school sport, communication and approaches from tennis coaches to schools should be made empathetically, understanding the wider and significant challenges school leaders will be facing.