

Arlington County Tennis Association (ACTA)

Doubles League Rules (As of March 27, 2011)

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I. Eligibility

A. Age and attire. No one below the age of 19 is eligible to play in the Arlington County Tennis Association (ACTA) Adult Doubles League. All players shall be appropriately dressed. Shirts shall be worn at all times.

B. Residency.

All Arlington County residents who want to play in the league are required to join ACTA by creating a member profile on actatennis.org and submitting proof of Arlington County residency and signing a waiver of ACTA liability. Nonresidents are permitted to join and must also create a member profile on actatennis.org and sign a waiver of ACTA liability. In addition nonresidents must pay a \$30 out-of-county league fee per season mandated by Arlington County Parks and Recreation for the nonresident usage of Arlington County public tennis courts through play in ACTA leagues. ACTA collects this fee on behalf of the County during the registration process and later sends it directly to the Arlington County Parks and Recreation.

Players are considered an “Arlington” resident if:

1. They are residents of Arlington County,
2. They own property in Arlington County,
3. They are employed by the Arlington County Government
4. The following are considered “Arlington” but must pay the \$30 non-resident fee:
 - a. Nonresidents and work in Arlington County Schools (State employees)
 - b. Nonresidents but work in Arlington County as primary job
 - c. Nonresidents but are captaining a team
 - d. Nonresidents but serve on the ACTA board

Note: Each team may have “one” captain or board member nonresident who counts as “Arlington”. Co-captain nonresidents not considered “Arlington”.

For on-line registration, an Arlington credit card billing address is acceptable as proof of residence. Also acceptable: copy of driver's license, business card, utility bill, or property title deed, provided it is in the name of the registrant.

Ratings: Players should follow the following guidelines when joining ACTA divisions.

The ACTA Open division corresponds roughly to NTRP 5.0 and above,

The ACTA A division corresponds roughly to NTRP 4.5 and above,

The ACTA B division corresponds roughly to NTRP 4.0,

The ACTA C division corresponds roughly to NTRP 3.5 and

The ACTA Round Robin division corresponds roughly to NTRP 3.0

Players with NTRP ratings are not allowed to join ACTA divisions below those that correspond to their rating (unless they appeal the rating), but may join a higher ACTA division if they are competitive in that division. Players without NTRP ratings are allowed to self-rate. Guidelines for self-rating are available online at the USTA website at:

<http://tennislink.usta.com/leagues/HelpTutorials/ab050000.html>

<http://assets.usta.com/assets/1/15/General%20%20Experienced%20Player%20Guidelines.pdf>

Among other guidelines, players under age 55 who have played tennis on a college team or who are tennis professionals should play in the A division, unless permission to play in a lower division is granted by the League Coordinator due to special circumstances. Players or their captains who are uncertain about the appropriate self-rating are encouraged to attend one of the visual rating clinics prior to each season. Players should only self-rate if they cannot attend one of the rating sessions, or if they join the league after the rating sessions occur.

Mid-season review of a player's rating is allowed for unusual situations, and may result in a player being moved up during a season. Players who are found during a season to have self-rated inappropriately will have all their matches forfeited. Players are expected to select the appropriate skill level and ACTA reserves the right to move players to the appropriate skill level.

Players with USTA NTRP ratings whose rating changes during the course of an ACTA season may finish the ACTA season, then must move up to the appropriate division.

New to ACTA doubles in 2010 are "TopDog" ratings. TopDog is a website that ACTA uses to schedule, input scores, and track standings in the doubles league. It also has a feature that when enabled can adjust a player's doubles rating to their match results. Initially a player's rating is set to their USTA rating. However, the player's TopDog rating will move up or down as the player wins or loses ACTA doubles matches. The algorithm is similar to the USTA NTRP system.

ACTA will use TopDog ratings for players that do not have a USTA ratings to place individuals at the appropriate level for the doubles league. The following are ACTA TopDog rating rules.

1. Initially when entering the league the player's TopDog rating will be:
 - a. Their USTA rating,
 - b. Their rating obtained at a rating clinic or
 - c. Their Self rating
2. TopDog rating scale. This will determine what level the individual will play at:
 - a. 5.5 (5.26 and above),
 - b. 5.0 (4.76 to 5.25),
 - c. 4.5 (4.26 to 4.75),
 - d. 4.0 (3.76 to 4.25),
 - e. 3.5 (3.26 to 3.8) and
 - f. 3.0 (3.25 and below)
3. At the end of the calendar year, the USTA publishes new NTRP ratings. Players who are moved up or down will have their TopDog rating adjust accordingly and are expected to play with their new rating.
4. All players will have TopDog ratings, but they will only be used for placement purposes for players without USTA ratings. The league coordinator may move players up regardless of their USTA rating if their ACTA record justifies it.

“A” Level 5.0 Rules:

If the ACTA “Open” division makes, then any 5.0 rated players will participate at that level. However, if no 5.0 division exists, then 5.0s are allowed to participate on “A” Level team rosters. The following are the 5.0 rules for the ACTA “A” Level:

1. Each A Level team is allowed two (2) 5.0 players.
2. Only one 5.0 is permitted to play each team match. They must play with a 4.0 (or less) rated player. There are exceptions to this rule.
3. If both captains agree prior to the match, one line can be designated “Open Level”, and players of any level can play (two 5.0s, one 5.0 and one 4.5, etc.). This line can either be Open 1, Mixed, or Women's Doubles.
4. Women are allowed to play Open 1 or Open 2 at a rating 0.5 lower than their assigned rating. For example, a 5.0 women and a 4.5 man can play Open 2. The woman is considered “4.5” for this match and the other 5.0 player would still be eligible to play on one of the other lines.
5. If at least 2/3 of the “A” level captains agree, ACTA can increase the number of 5.0s allowed on each team.

Finally, the purpose of the ACTA doubles league is to provide fun, competitive matches. Because ratings are a broad measure of skill, it is possible for players or teams of a given rating to dominate players or teams with the same rating. To ensure fun and competitive matches within ACTA divisions, ACTA reserves the right to move players or teams to the appropriate division regardless of rating if they are dominating a division. This will generally be done by the League Coordinator using multiple criteria, including TopDog ratings, winning more than 80 percent of matches and more than 66% of games, nomination by team captains, and observation of match play.

II. ACTA Waiver

All players are required to sign the ACTA waiver and the Arlington County Hold Harmless Agreement. While registering on-line, the requirement is automatically satisfied when they check the appropriate boxes during the membership registration process.

III. Rosters

A. Basic Roster Requirement.

A player cannot play a match unless first officially placed on a team roster in accordance with the deadlines discussed in III.B below. They must be in the on-line scoring database and placed on a team roster. Any match played by a player in violation of this provision is an automatic forfeit. Please allow one week processing time if registering by check.

A player cannot be on more than one team roster at the same time. Violation of this provision by a player may result in suspension from the league and/or the team for whom the player played may have to forfeit the match.

Each team roster must be comprised of at least 2/3 Arlington County residents beginning in July 2009. The 2/3 requirement will be strictly enforced by assessing match penalties to the teams not meeting this. The penalties are outlined in section III.C.

B. Roster Deadlines/Modifications. Teams may add or delete players up to two weeks prior to the last scheduled doubles match. If a player does not play in a single match, they are considered dropped from the roster and do not help or hurt a team to meet their residency requirement. The player may ask for a refund for their ACTA dues and league fees. Any player on a team roster who plays a minimum of one match is considered a permanent member of that roster for the remainder of the season. No substitutions can be made for injured players.

C. Playing Time for Arlington County Residents. In each season, the Arlington County resident listed on a team roster must play at least twice during the regular season. Failure to do so will result in that person NOT counting toward roster Arlington residency requirements. A penalty to the team's total match wins will be assessed equal to the number of un-played matches by residents that put the team at the residency requirement. That is, if a resident counting toward the residency requirement does not play at all the team will forfeit 2 matches; if a resident plays once, the team will forfeit 1 match.

The league coordinator may send an email to captains during the season with a summary of the team's residency standing. The requirement is that each nonresident needs two qualified Arlington residents on the roster for the team to avoid any match penalty points. Use the actatennis.org website to recruit more Arlington players if necessary.

IV. Regular Season Matches and Playoffs

A. Regular Season Schedule. In the spring, the regular season normally begins the first or second Sunday of each April. In the fall, the regular season normally begins the last Saturday in August or immediately after Labor Day. The league schedule, however, may vary from season-to-season at the discretion of the league coordinator and the ACTA Board of Directors.

B. Regular Season Format. There five divisions: Open, A, B, C, and Round Robin which correspond roughly to NTRP 5.0, 4.5, 4.0, 3.5, and 3.0 levels respectively. The regular season match format for each division is as follows:

Open- Men's, Mixed, Women's,

A and B- Women's, Open 1, Mixed, Open 2

C – Women's, Men's, Mixed 1, Mixed 2 and

Round Robin – Random play as administered by the league coordinator

Whenever there is a "No. 1" and "No. 2" designation, whether the Mixed category or the Open category, the players should be positioned according to partnership strength as determined by the team captain (e.g., Open 1 and Mixed 1 partnerships must be stronger than the partnerships in Open 2 or Mixed 2). Please notify the opposing captain if a stronger pair (due to schedule constraints) is playing in a lower position. Note this only applies to levels in the same category. Open 2 could be stronger than Mixed 1 for example. This rule is also extended in the playoffs.

Whenever there is a "No. 1" and "No. 2" designation, any forfeits must be at the lowest level before forfeiting at a higher level. For example, a team cannot field a pair for Open 2 (or mixed 2) but forfeit Open 1 (or Mixed 1).

A player can only play once in a team match.

C. Commitment to Play Scheduled Matches. In each season, all ACTA team captains must commit to playing all scheduled matches regardless of whether the matches will affect the outcome of the team standings for playoff purposes. Forfeits are greatly frowned upon and, if excessive, will be reviewed by the League Coordinator.

D. Playoffs

Player Eligibility. Players participating in the playoffs must have played at least two times during the regular season. One of these matches may be a "default" match where the opposing team has defaulted a line (either before the match or a team failing to show up). However only one forfeit may go towards the "plays twice playoff" rule and the player's name must be entered when the match results are recorded. A player must physically play one match to be eligible.

Note: When a team receives a forfeit, any eligible player may be entered into that slot. The player did not have to be scheduled to play. However the forfeited match cannot be altered later in the season to enable other players to qualify.

Team Playoff Eligibility. Standing to play in the playoffs will be based on the number of individual matches won during the regular season minus any match penalties. In the case of a tie of two or more teams, the determining factors will be used to break the tie (by priority):

1. Head-to-head competition during the regular season,
2. Fewest forfeits,
3. Fewest sets lost total in the course of the entire regular season,
4. Fewest number of games lost total in the course of the entire regular season and
5. Coin flip

Playoff Format. For the Semifinals and Championship Finals, the team lineups will consist of five doubles teams (expanded from four during the regular season). The playoff format for each division is as follows:

Open – Men's, Women's, and Mixed,
A and B - Women's, Open 1, Open 2, Mixed 1 and Mixed 2,
C - Women's, Men's, Mixed 1, Mixed 2 and Mixed 3 and
Round Robin – No Playoffs.

V. Rules for Match Play

A. Starting Time of Matches. In the spring league, the first two matches are played Sunday afternoons at 3pm and the second two matches whenever the first two matches conclude but not earlier than 4:30pm unless otherwise agreed upon by both team captains. In the fall league, the starting times are Saturday mornings at 10am and 11:30am, respectively. Note the Open league will play all three lines simultaneously.

Warm-Up: A ten minute warm-up, beginning at the times show above, will precede each individual match. Please keep warm-ups short to avoid play running past the allotted time.

Lateness / No Shows. Players are expected to be on time for matches. If one or both players on a doubles team is listed on the lineup card and fails to show, and if no qualified substitute (any player listed on the team roster who is not originally listed on the exchanged lineup card) is available, and both members of the opposing team are present, that match may be forfeited. For the first round matches, players are given a 15 minute grace period after which the captain is entitled to insist upon a forfeit. For the second round matches players are also given a fifteen minute grace period, after which the captain is entitled to insist upon a forfeit (Note - Home Team captains, or their designee, are responsible for keeping time). If a forfeit is claimed, both captains or their designees must be informed immediately at the court.

Keeping Time. For purposes of calculating lateness, forfeit times, the length of bathroom breaks, the length of warm-ups, and the third set tiebreaker occurrence the following rule shall apply.

The Home Team captain or his/her designee shall be the timekeeper, unless the two captains or their designees agree to an alternative method of keeping time. If agreed to otherwise by the two team captains or their designees, an official timekeeper on each individual court can be selected by consensus among the four individual players playing the match on that court.

B. Line up Cards/Substitutions. Captains will exchange COMPLETE lineup cards no later than five minutes before the first warm-up begins. Once the lineup is exchanged, substitutions will be allowed only in cases of injury or illness, onset of injury or illness during warm-up, or failure of a player to show (players on the official team roster who are not originally listed to play according to the originally exchanged lineup card qualify as eligible substitutes, but substitutions cannot be made after an individual match has started). If, after official exchange of the line-up card, a captain notifies the opposing captain of a forfeit, the non-forfeiting captain may rearrange players among matches not already begun (still no player can play more than one match).

C. Court Reservations. The courts will be reserved in ACTA's name for each team match. If agreeable to captains and players, empty courts not reserved by ACTA may be used to expedite matches. Players on extra courts must follow posted rules for public use. Signs shall be posted on the courts to indicate ACTA Doubles League reservations.

D. Tennis Balls. The Home Team will be responsible for providing the tennis balls for the match. The tennis balls will be opened at the beginning of the warm-up. REGULAR or EXTRA DUTY FELT balls are recommended. Budget permitting, ACTA may supply a case of balls to teams prior to the regular season and playoff matches.

E. Injury and Illness. Once play has begun, if the match is halted because of injury or illness, the injured player and his/her partner are considered "retired" and the opponents win the match.

F. Bathroom Breaks. ACTA follows the USTA regulations governing "toilet visits." A player may request ONE suspension of play for such a visit. Such a request can only be made at the conclusion of a set. The time limit is TEN MINUTES and is not to be considered a natural loss of physical condition or injury. If the player requesting such a break does not return within the allotted 10 minutes, the opposing team is permitted to take a default.

G. Scoring. Matches will be the best two out of three sets using conventional scoring (i.e., playing all ad points). A 7-point tiebreak will be used if a set reaches 6-6 (i.e. first team to 7 points with at least a 2 point margin). Use the USTA "Coleman" Tiebreaker, with players switching sides after the first point, and then every four points thereafter. This assures that a server in doubles will serve on the same side that he/she has been serving on for the whole set. It also eliminates a six-point swing if the conditions favor a specific side (due to strong wind or difficult sun conditions).

Due to issues with matches running over their allotted time schedule, the following rules were implemented to speed up play:

1. If the match has split sets, the default ACTA rule is a third set tiebreaker. The winning side is first team to 10 points with at least a 2 point margin (using the Coleman tiebreaker).
2. If 15 minutes remain before the 1 ½ hour match time expires (from the start of the warm-up), and all four players agree, a full third set may be played.
3. If there are free courts available or no match waiting and all players agree, the third set may also be played out to completion.

H. Line Calls. Players are responsible for calling all balls on their side of the net and assisting opponents in making calls if help is requested. Spectators cannot be enlisted to assist in making calls. If partners disagree on any call, the benefit goes to their opponents. In unusual circumstances, a referee may be recruited to assist in line calls and match scoring. If team A requests a referee, then any mutually agreeable individual may become a referee for that match. The referee may stand on the court near the net pole or at any other location that does not interfere with play. The primary responsibility for line calls shall remain with the players; however the referee shall ASSIST with line calls and match scoring and may overrule any team when she or he feels confident to do so.

I. Sportsmanship Guidelines. Please refer to the “USTA On-Court Rules” and “The Code of Conduct” made available on the USTA (usta.com) and ACTA websites (actatennis.org). Based on the USTA Rules and Code of Conduct, and upon events that have occurred in prior ACTA doubles league play, ACTA has developed a set of “sportsmanship” guidelines. ACTA expects captains, players, and spectators to recognize appropriate tennis etiquette.

Play must be continuous. Attempts to stall or extend rest periods for the purpose of recovering from a loss of physical condition are illegal (unless opponents agree otherwise). Intentional distractions that interfere with an opponent’s concentration or effort to play the ball are prohibited.

Spectators, including family and friends, are welcome to watch matches. Their role, however, is clearly restricted to passive observer with no involvement of any kind during the match. It is particularly inappropriate to cheer when an opponent double faults or makes errors that are clearly “unforced”.

Players are expected to maintain full control over their emotions and the resulting behavior throughout the match.

The Doubles League Coordinator will rule on written allegations of unsportsmanlike behavior in League play. The Coordinator will be guided in his decision making process by USTA Rules and Codes of Conduct, but he or she will also have discretion since ACTA is an independent organization with its own institutional interests to consider. Parties may appeal any sportsmanship decisions by the Doubles League Coordinator to the ACTA Board. The ACTA Board will appoint a three-person panel that will be the final arbiter. The panel may not include any player from the same division (Open, A, B, C or D) as the division where the dispute lies. The three-person panel needs a 2-1 vote for its decisions. The standard of proof in all sportsmanship decisions is the preponderance of the evidence, also known as balance of

probabilities. This is the standard required in most civil cases. The standard is met if the proposition is more likely to be true than not true. Effectively, the standard is satisfied if there is greater than 50 percent chance that the proposition is true. Independent third party witnesses that are not associated with either party are helpful but not necessary to meet this standard.

J. Reporting of Results. The home team is responsible for entering the scores into ACTA's TopDog on-line scoring system no later than 72 hours after the completion of the match. The TopDog program does not allow partial match results to be entered (if captains agree to reschedule one or more individual matches). Enter this match as a "double default" and correct the scorecard within 24 hours with the results of the completed individual match(s). Email the doubles coordinator with any questions (doubles@actatennis.org).

For makeup matches, teams have one week to find an agreeable time to make up the match. The results can be entered on actatennis.org or emailed to the league or flight coordinator. The opposing team captain is responsible for verifying the match results. Any discrepancy must be reported to the Doubles League Coordinator within 48 hours after the deadline for reporting. Please check both the names and the scores as this could possibly have ramifications on playoff eligibility.

K. Forfeits and Postponements.

Advance Notice of Forfeits. If a team captain is aware that his or her team will have to forfeit any or all of the matches, a courtesy call or email to the opposing captain should be made as soon as it is known to prevent inconveniencing anyone.

Fully-Called Rain Outs. If league officials call off a match PRIOR to the exchange of lineup cards, an official rain out make-up date is established by ACTA. Players are ENCOURAGED to make up the matches on their own time, but the matches must be made up by the date of the official rain out makeup date established by the league officials. The captain of each team should oversee this process to ensure that all matches are made up on or before the next official rainout makeup date.

Partial Rainouts. Captains should exercise common sense when assessing a court's playability. Captains can mutually suspend matches at any time after rain begins.

1. If Captains cannot agree to suspend the match, play shall be called off if the court remains unplayable after 45 minutes from the onset of rain. If the 45 minutes lapses before the second set of matches are scheduled to begin, those matches will be called off if they cannot reasonably begin within 20 minutes of their scheduled start time.
2. Once line-up cards have been exchanged, and matches are subsequently halted because of rain, captains must reschedule matches. On-going matches MUST be played with the EXISTING players on the lineup card within the next two weeks. The home team captain must give the opposing captain three dates from which to choose. If an agreeable time cannot be met the home team takes the forfeit. Substitutes can be made for matches that have not been started but are ONLY permitted if (1) the substitute was not originally listed on the exchanged lineup card and (2) the substitute is on the official team roster.

3. If neither team can field the same lineup within the two week timeframe, then a new line can be played with players that are not on the lineup card.

Non Rain-Related Rescheduling. Captains are entitled to take forfeits when an opposing captain cannot field a team. However, he or she is ENCOURAGED to reschedule the match if practical. If the Captains do agree to make up the match, it must be made up on or before the rain makeup date associated with that match. If either Captain still cannot field a team on the date and time of the next rain makeup date, the match shall be forfeited. Please see Section V.J. for reporting match results.

Forfeits. The forfeit policy is as follows and covers both regularly scheduled and makeup matches.

1. If one or both players on a team fail to show for a regularly scheduled match (outside of the prescribed 15 minute grace period), and both opposing players are present, the match may be forfeited. If a forfeit is being claimed, both captains or representatives must be informed immediately at the court.
2. When two captains agree to reschedule a match (non-rain-related or otherwise), if one or both players on a team fail to show for the match (outside of the prescribed grace period) and both opposing players are present, the match is forfeited.
3. If a non-weather related match is rescheduled and both teams cannot fully field teams, the team that originally requested the reschedule takes a forfeit.
4. For a double forfeit match (where neither team can field a line), both teams will receive zero "0" points.

VI. Awards: The ACTA Doubles Jerry Graf Captain of the Year Award

ACTA will present an award to a captain that the League Coordinator feels has done the best job in promoting sportsmanship and fair play in the doubles league. This award is named for Jerry Graf, ACTA's founder, who started ACTA in 1989. The following is some of the many criteria used in the selection process:

- 1) Selecting a Co-Captain,
- 2) Inputting scores promptly to the website within 72 hours,
- 3) No defaults for the season,
- 4) Bringing a new player into his or her team that hasn't played ACTA,
- 5) Creating a team name,
- 6) Scheduling a team practice,
- 7) Showing sportsmanship towards other teams,
- 8) Meet the 2/3 Arlington residency requirement,
- 9) Play all team members (not just Arlington) twice during the season and
- 10) Encouraging team members participate in ACTA ladders, socials, or tournaments