

Racquetball Rules of Play

(See <http://usra.org/Rulebook.aspx> for complete rulebook)

Objective

The objective is to win each rally by serving or returning the ball so the opponent is unable to keep the ball in play. A rally is over when a player (or team in doubles) is unable to hit the ball before it touches the floor twice, is unable to return the ball in such a manner that it touches the front wall before it touches the floor, or when a hinder is called.

Points and Outs

Points are scored only by the serving side when it serves an irretrievable serve (an ace) or wins a rally.

Match, Game, Tiebreaker

A match is won by the first side winning two games. The first two games of a match are played to 15 points (win by 1 point). If each side wins one game, a tiebreaker game is played to 11 points (win by 2 points).

Defaults

Any player who arrives more than 10 minutes late defaults the match and the score will be recorded as 15-0, 15-0.

3.9 - Fault Serves

The following serves are faults and any two in succession result in an out:

(a) Foot Faults. A foot fault results when:

1. At the start of or during the service motion, any part of the server (or doubles partner), including the racquet, touches the floor outside of the service zone.
2. At the end of the serve, the server steps with either foot on the floor beyond the service line (with no part of the foot on the line or inside the service zone) before the served ball crosses the short line.

(b) Short Service. A short serve is any served ball that first hits the front wall and, on the rebound, hits the floor on or in front of the short line either with or without touching a side wall.

(c) Three-Wall Serve. A three-wall serve is any served ball that first hits the front wall and, on the rebound, strikes both side walls before touching the floor.

(d) Ceiling Serve. A ceiling serve is any served ball that first hits the front wall and then touches the ceiling (with or without touching a side wall).

(e) Long Serve. A long serve is a served ball that first hits the front wall and rebounds to the back wall before touching the floor (with or without touching a side wall).

(f) Bouncing Ball Outside Service Zone. Bouncing the ball outside the service zone, including the ball touching a side wall, as a part of the service motion is a fault serve.

(g) Illegal Drive Serve. A drive serve in which the player fails to observe the 17-foot drive service zone outlined in Rule 3.6.

(h) Screen Serve. A served ball that first hits the front wall and on the rebound passes so closely to the server, or server's partner in doubles, that it prevents the receiver from having a clear view of the ball. (The receiver is obligated to take up good court position, near center court, to obtain that view.)

(i) In one serve play, if a serve is called a screen, the server will be allowed one more opportunity to hit a legal serve. Two consecutive screen serves results in an out.

(j) Serving before the Receiver is Ready. A serve is made while the receiver is not ready as described in Rule 3.5(b). In one serve play, if a serve is made while the receiver is not ready as described in Rule 3.5(b), the server will be allowed one more opportunity to hit a legal serve.

3.14 - Replay Hinders

A rally is replayed without penalty and the server resumes play at first serve whenever a replay hinder occurs. Also, see Rule 3.15 which describes conditions under which a penalty hinder might be declared and result in loss of the rally.

(a) Situations

1. Court Hinders. The referee should stop play immediately whenever the ball hits any part of the court that was designated prior to the match as a court hinder (such as a vent grate). The referee should also stop play (i) when the ball takes an irregular bounce as a result of contacting an irregular surface (such as court light or vent) or after striking a wet spot on the floor or wall and (ii) when, in the referee's opinion, the irregular bounce affected the rally.
2. Ball Hits Opponent. When an opponent is hit by a return shot in flight, it is a replay hinder. **If the opponent is struck by a ball that obviously did not have the velocity or direction to reach the front wall, it is not a hinder, and the player who hit the ball will lose the rally.** A player who has been hit by the ball can stop play and make the call though the call must be made immediately and acknowledged by the referee. Note this interference may, under certain conditions, be declared a penalty hinder. See Rule 3.15.
3. Body Contact. If body contact occurs which the referee believes was sufficient to stop the rally, either for the purpose of preventing injury by further contact or because the contact prevented a player from being able to make a reasonable return, the referee shall call a hinder. Incidental body contact in which the offensive player clearly will have the advantage should not be called a hinder, unless the offensive player obviously stops play. Contact with the racquet on the follow-through normally is not considered a hinder for either player.
4. Screen Ball. Any ball rebounding from the front wall so close to the body of the defensive player that it prevents the offensive player from having a clear view of the ball. (The referee should be careful not to make the screen call so quickly that it takes away a good offensive opportunity.) A ball that passes between the legs of a player who has just returned the ball is not automatically a screen. It depends on

whether the other player is impaired as a result. Generally, the call should work to the advantage of the offensive player.

5. Backswing Hinder. Any body or racquet contact, on the backswing or on the way to or just prior to returning the ball, which impairs the hitter's ability to take a reasonable swing. This call can be made by the player attempting the return, though the call must be made immediately and is subject to the referee's approval. Note the interference may be considered a penalty hinder. See Rule 3.15.
6. Safety Holdup. Any player about to execute a return, who believes that striking the opponent with the ball or racquet is likely, may immediately stop play and request a replay hinder. This call must be made immediately and is subject to acceptance and approval of the referee. (The referee will grant a replay hinder if it is believed the holdup was reasonable and the player would have been able to return the shot. The referee may also call a penalty hinder if warranted.)
7. Other Interference. Any other unintentional interference that prevents an opponent from having a fair chance to see or return the ball. Example: When a ball from another court enters the court during a rally or when a referee's call on an adjacent court obviously distracts a player.

3.16 - Timeouts

(a) Rest Periods. Each player or team is entitled to three 30-second timeouts in games to 15 and two 30-second timeouts in games to 11. Timeouts may not be called by either side once the service motion has begun. Calling for a timeout when none remain or after the service motion has begun will result in the assessment of a technical foul for delay of game. If a player takes more than 30 seconds for a single timeout, the referee may automatically charge any remaining timeouts, as needed, for any extra time taken. Once all time allowed has expired, a delay of game technical foul can be assessed. A player who leaves the court should call a timeout or else advise the referee of the reason for leaving the court. If a player leaves the court without advising the referee, a timeout may be charged to that player. If none remain, the referee may assess a technical foul for delay of game; however, the referee may excuse a delay if the player's reason for leaving was to correct a problem affecting the playability of the court, such as obtaining a towel to dry the court or disposing of some foreign material from the court.

(b) Injury. If a player is injured during the course of a match because of contact, such as with the ball, racquet, wall, floor, or another player, an injury timeout will be awarded. While a player may call more than one timeout for the same injury or for additional injuries that occur during the match, a player is not allowed more than a total of 15 minutes of rest for injury during the entire match. If the injured player is not able to resume play after total rest of 15 minutes, the match shall be awarded to the opponent. 1. Should any external bleeding occur, the referee must halt play as soon as the rally is over, charge an injury timeout to the person who is bleeding, and not allow the match to continue until the bleeding has stopped. 2. Muscle cramps and pulls, fatigue, and other ailments that are not caused by direct contact on the court will not be considered an injury. Injury time is also not allowed for pre-existing conditions.

(c) Equipment Timeouts. Players are expected to keep all clothing and equipment in good, playable condition and are expected to use regular timeouts and time between games for adjustment and replacement of equipment. If a player or team is out of

timeouts and the referee determines that an equipment change or adjustment is necessary for fair and safe continuation of the match, the referee may grant an equipment timeout not to exceed 2 minutes. The referee may allow additional time under unusual circumstances.

(d) Between Games. The rest period between the first two games of a match is 2 minutes. If a tiebreaker is necessary, the rest period between the second and third game is 5 minutes.

For complete rules please consult the US Racquetball Association at <http://usra.org/Rulebook.aspx>