

HOUSTON LADIES TENNIS ASSOCIATION (HLTA) LEAGUE RULES

January 3, 2019

GENERAL RULES

1. HLTA is a hard court doubles league made up of 4 levels. Each level is divided into flights based on ability - Open, Champ1, Champ2, A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3 and B4. Each large flight is divided into divisions based on geographical location of the Playing Sites.
2. HLTA has two seasons - Fall Season and Spring Season. The exact start date for each season will be determined by the Head League Coordinator, Membership and Site Director, and President and published on the Website (www.hlta.com).
3. Each team's non-refundable registration fee and a roster with a minimum of 10 paid players must be completed online (www.hlta.com) by the published Player Registration Deadline to be eligible to play.
4. **Each roster must have a minimum of 10 paid players and a maximum of 16.** HLTA considers "regulars" and "substitutes" as equals in membership. A date designated as the Roster Submission Deadline will be set each season. This will be the last day that the Captains may amend their rosters. Additions and deletions to the roster may be made after this date (provided the total roster does not exceed 16 players or drop below 10 players) by notifying their Flight Coordinator. Additional players will be eligible to play the upcoming Monday provided the Level Coordinator receives the request no later than the preceding Thursday at 5:00 p.m., otherwise they will not be eligible until the next scheduled Monday match. **After the Roster Submission Deadline, a player may only be removed from a team if the player has not yet played a match, AND providing the team maintains a minimum of 10 players after such a deletion. A deleted player may join a different team once per season if there are more than two matches remaining in the season. The PLAYER must notify the Head League Coordinator in order to switch teams.**
5. All team members must be paid members of HLTA. All players listed on the roster must have registered and paid their non-refundable dues online through the HLTA website. No one under 18 years of age, or currently in high school may participate in HLTA matches. Any player who plays without being a member of a team forfeits any wins. In addition, a penalty may be assessed as determined by the HLTA Board.
6. Flight Determination.
 - (a) Determination of level and flight of teams is based on prior performance, points scored, and the number of teams at each level. The Head League Coordinator in conjunction with the Level Coordinators reserves the right to adjust the HLTA level and flight of team movement as needed Any team (or player) that does not play for one season will be considered a new team (or player) when re-entering League.
 - (b) Division winners will be moved up a flight. Teams with 75% of the total points will no longer be moved up.
 - (c) A team winning less than 33% of its possible points will be reclassified for the upcoming season at the next lower flight. Any B4 team not making 33% of its points will be allowed to remain at the B4 flight.
 - (d) Any newly formed team will be required to submit two level options for entry into HLTA. The new team will be placed at their requested level space permitting. The final flight determination will be made by the Head League Coordinator and the Level Coordinator based on the number of teams at that level. A new team entering at a specific flight or a team being re-formed to remain at the same flight may consist only of a combination of the following:

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- (1) Players who played at that flight the previous season and whose team made its points;
 - (2) New players to HLTA;
 - (3) Not more than 6 players from any higher flight;
 - (4) Not more than 6 players from any lower flight.
- (e) Any team that drops out after the League schedules are prepared or during the season shall not be eligible to play League the following season. This would apply to all members listed on that team's roster.
- (f) Open will have a maximum of **12** teams. Any newly formed team may not enter at the Open or Champ 1 level. The method of determining end of season movement between the Open and Champ levels will be determined by the Flight Coordinator and the Head League Coordinator and will be communicated to all captains involved prior to the start of the season.
7. Each team must have a Captain or Acting Captain **who is responsible for downloading her team's master schedule and score sheets.**
8. The Home Team must furnish 4 cans of unopened yellow USTA approved, hard court, all court, heavy duty or extra duty balls. Balls designated for clay courts, practice balls and seconds are not permitted. The matches will be played using the balls opened by the Home Team in front of at least one opponent.

PLAYING SITE REQUIREMENTS

1. Court Requirements. HLTA reserves the right to approve Playing Sites. Two playable courts allow a maximum of two (2) teams; four playable courts allow a maximum of four (4) teams; six playable courts allow a maximum of (6) teams, etc. The Home Team shall be responsible for ensuring that the courts comply with ITF/USTA regulations.
2. Amenities. The Home Team Playing Sites must have a restroom and water available.
3. Parking Fees. **Any required court fee/guest fee/parking fee must be paid by the Home Team.** A captain or acting captain's parking fees must be paid by the Home Team regardless of whether she is playing. The Home Team shall not be required to pay for any other Visiting Team member's spectating time.

SCHEDULE

1. Regular matches will be scheduled on Monday mornings. All matches will be played on the date scheduled except for matches postponed because of rain (see MATCH PLAY #6) and matches rescheduled pursuant to the SPRING BREAK rules below.
2. The Home Team Captain will ascertain the number of courts available (at least two required) and must contact the Visiting Team Captain at least 4 days prior to their match (**NO LATER THAN THURSDAY NOON**) to discuss place, order of matches and whether the upcoming matches will be played all indoors or all outdoors. Once a match is scheduled (or rescheduled in the case of a rain make-up) it may not be changed unless rained out. The Visiting Team should be informed of Home Team's club dress code, if any. All Captains and Co-Captains must have at least one phone number listed on the HLTA website.

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3. Each team must have a Captain or Acting Captain present at every scheduled match. Captains MUST exchange line-ups **before** players are sent to their courts. ONCE LINE-UP SHEETS HAVE BEEN EXCHANGED, LINES OR NAMES CANNOT BE MOVED FROM ONE LINE TO ANOTHER. A substitute (a player who is not scheduled to play on the original score sheet) may be used on any line that has not begun play. **It shall be the Home Team's responsibility to ensure that all lines are playing on the proper court.**
4. The Home Team Captain shall have first choice as to when her lines shall play. Two first round matches should be scheduled at 9:00 a.m. and two second round matches should be scheduled at 10:30a.m. **Warm-ups should begin promptly at the scheduled time with the available players from both teams and shall not exceed fifteen (15) minutes.** A player arriving on the court fifteen minutes after the scheduled time shall not be entitled to any warm-up. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a tardy player or players shall be given up to twenty minutes after the scheduled start time to arrive on the court before a default is called (see MATCH PLAY #5.) The match officially begins when the first point is played and all warm-ups, including serves, must be taken beforehand. Generally, one and one half hours should be allotted to each round for scheduling purposes. A later or staggered start time is permissible and all 4 lines may play at one time (courts permitting) if agreed upon in advance by **both** Captains. **INDOOR TEAMS** should book the courts for 4 hours to avoid being bumped.
5. After the match, Captains MUST sign both score sheets indicating their agreement of scores. In the event of a serious disagreement players should make every effort to finish the match. If a grievance is to be filed Captains should not sign the score sheets and should follow the procedures outlined in MATCH PLAY #14. Home Captains should report the scores online **no later than 5:00 p.m. on the day of the match** indicating any defaulted lines and reason(s) for the default(s). Visiting Captains are responsible for confirming or contesting the reported online scores and should do so **no later than 10:00 p.m. on the day of the match.** If any difficulties are encountered, Captains should contact their Flight Coordinator. If scores are not confirmed by the following day, the Flight Coordinator will auto-confirm the scores. Score sheets must be retained by each Captain until the final standings are determined for the season.
6. Spring Break.
 - (a) The Head League Coordinator will designate one week of the Spring Season as a League-Wide Bye ("LWB") based on which date appears to accommodate the most teams. Teams whose Spring Break week is not during the LWB may reschedule on either the Monday of the LWB or as a rain make-up to be played within 3 weeks. The need to reschedule the match must be reported to **both** the opponent and the Flight Coordinator **before the start of the Spring Season.** If a match is to be played as a rain make-up, regular rain make-up rules apply. Make-ups may begin before either Spring Break week provided the Flight Coordinator is notified in advance of the line/date/time/location. If either team wants the match rescheduled, then rescheduling is mandatory. No team will be required to play matches during their declared Spring Break week. All matches must be completed by the last day to report scores (posted in the Document Library on the Website).
 - (b) In the event of a rainout the week prior to their Spring Break, teams will not be required to play during their Spring Break week. The teams may take an additional week (or two weeks in the event of conflicting Spring Breaks) to complete the match.

MATCH PLAY

1. Team matches will consist of 4 doubles matches. Individual matches will be the best 2 out of 3 sets playing regular scoring.

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2. **Play must be continuous.** When players change ends, a maximum of 90 seconds are allowed, however, after the first game of each set and during a tiebreak, play shall be continuous. During the individual matches, a break not to exceed 10 minutes may be taken between the 2nd and 3rd sets only, but bathroom breaks may be taken at any time, if necessary.
3. Scoring.
 - (a) The Server shall announce the game score before the first point of a game and the point score before each subsequent point of the game.
 - (b) 8 points will be counted for Line #1, 7 points for Line #2, 6 points for Line #3 and 5 points for Line #4.

A bonus point will be given for a 3rd set loss to the losing team provided all three sets are completed.
 - (c) Disputes. Disputes over the score shall be resolved by using one of the following methods which are listed in the order of preference:
 - (1) Count all points and games agreed upon by the players and replay only disputed points or games.
 - (2) Play from a score mutually agreeable to all players.
 - (3) Spin a racket or toss a coin.
 - (d) A total of all points at the end of the regular season will determine the winner of each flight or each division where flights are so divided. In the case of a tie for first place in a division, a winner will be decided using the following method:
 - (1) Head-to-head season winner
 - (2) In case of a head to head tie, both teams will be declared winners.
 - (e) All division winners will receive individual awards.
4. Sportsmanship.
 - (a) Each team will receive a Sportsmanship Rating from their opponents at the conclusion of each match.
 - (b) Sportsmanship Ratings are based on the Players' match conduct and the following should be considered:
 - (1) Tennis Etiquette
 - (2) Courtesy of the players
 - (3) Cooperation
 - (c) A total of all sportsmanship ratings at the end of the regular season will determine the Sportsmanship winner of each level. There will be only one Sportsmanship winner of each level. In case of a tie, the Level Coordinator will choose the winner.
5. Tiebreak. The 12-point tiebreak as specified by USTA will be in effect any time the score reaches 6- all in any set. The team that first wins seven points shall win the game and the set provided they lead by a margin of two points. If the score reaches six points all, the tiebreak shall be extended until the two point margin has been achieved. Numerical scoring shall be used throughout the tiebreak. The order of service is as follows:
 - The player whose turn it is to serve shall be the server for the first point from the right service court (deuce court).

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- Thereafter each player shall serve in rotation for two points, starting from the left service court (ad court) and in the same order of that set, until the winners of the tiebreak and set have been decided.
- Players change ends after every six points and at the conclusion of the tiebreak.
- The team that served first in the set that ended in a tiebreak shall receive service in the first game of the following set.

6. Defaults.

- (a) There will be a 20-minute default rule in effect for all scheduled matches. The official time for determining defaults is available at 713-529-4444. Players are urged to report for their matches at least 15 minutes before the scheduled time. Default time for second round matches will be immediately following completion of first round matches but not before 20 minutes after the scheduled time. For example, default time for a 10:30 a.m. scheduled match would be 10:50 a.m. This rule must be strictly followed. A default should not be played and is credited to the team having both players present on time.

Clarification of terms: **Forfeit** is called prior to the match starting. For any line that is a Forfeit prior to the match starting, players names are not entered. **Default** is called after the score sheets have been exchanged and a player is not able to play. **Retired** is if a player can no longer continue play after the match has begun.

- (b) A defaulted match is scored as 8 points for Line #1, 7 points for Line #2, 6 points for Line #3, 5 points for Line #4 plus any applicable penalty (see Rule 5(c) below). The names of all players, including those defaulting, must be written in the proper space on the score sheet as if the match had been played as scheduled. If a match has begun and then must be defaulted because of injury or illness of a player, write the match score up to the point of default: "2-6, 4-3, Retired".
- (c) Defaults must be made from the bottom up. Any default not made from the bottom up (Line #4, #3, #2, #1) will be loss of the applicable line points plus a 5 point penalty. For special circumstances, the 5 point penalty may be appealed to the Head League Coordinator followed by a Board Review. This penalty will not be assessed if the originally scheduled line shows up, dressed to play, before all other matches have been completed. When playing rain make-ups, defaulting from the bottom up does not apply.
- (d) The default of more than one line for any match will be reviewed by the Board. The default of four lines by a team is a serious breach of sportsmanship and shall subject the defaulting team to a penalty of up to 40 points. Within one week of the date of a four line default, the Captain of the defaulting team shall notify the Flight Coordinator in writing of the reason(s) for such default. The Board, upon consideration of such written explanation as well as any other information presented to the Board, shall assess such penalty as it deems appropriate.
- (e) After the match has begun, any violation that could result in a default must be decided by the four players on the court. There will be no interference from the captains or spectators.

7. Rain.

- (a) If it is raining:

Home Captain must contact Visiting Captain no later than 8:00 a.m. A rainout should be called if, in the reasonable opinion of the Home Captain, the courts will not be playable by 9:45 a.m.

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(b) If it looks like rain:

In questionable weather, teams scheduled for first round matches must be at the Playing Site. Cancellation of matches by Captains should not be made until 45 minutes have passed. If rain occurs after matches have begun, be prepared to wait for 30 minutes to determine if courts become playable. Second round matches will be considered rained out if first round matches cannot begin within 45 minutes of the scheduled start time.

Rained out matches must be rescheduled at the discretion of both Captains. If mutual agreement cannot be reached, the Flight Coordinator may select a date. **Once a rain make-up is mutually agreed upon and filed with the Coordinator, teams are committed to play on that scheduled date and time (barring further rain).**

Rained out matches must be completed **within three weeks** of the originally scheduled date or no points will be scored. If a rain make-up is also rained out, an additional two weeks from the date of that rainout can be taken to complete the match. Except for Spring Break, **no additional allowances shall be made for byes of any nature**. All make-up extensions are subject to the score reporting deadlines posted in the Required Points Chart.

In the event of a rainout, the Home Team shall so advise the Flight Coordinator by 5:00 p.m. on the day of the rained out match. The date, time and location of all rescheduled matches must be reported to the Flight Coordinator within 48 hours by BOTH team Captains. Captains are encouraged to schedule rained out lines as soon as possible. Each line may be scheduled individually.

All rescheduled matches must be played at courts furnished by the Home Team unless a change of location is agreed upon by all 4 players (or the Flight Coordinator has selected a date). Rescheduled matches do not have to be played under the same conditions (all indoors or all outdoors). All make-up matches will be subject to Home Court rules.

(c) If some lines have finished:

Completed matches will stand as played.

(d) If some lines have started but not finished:

Incomplete matches must be resumed by the same four players at the same set, game and point as they stood when halted. No player substitutions can be made. Players shall record who was serving, service rotation, which players were at deuce and ad sides and at which end each team was located.

(e) If some lines have not begun:

For those lines, including forfeited lines that have not started play due to rain, teams do not have to adhere to their original line-ups when playing make-up matches. Any players may be used as long as they have not already started play on another line for that match. When playing rain make-ups, defaulting from the bottom up does not apply.

If line-ups have been exchanged but play on one or more lines cannot begin due to rain, the score sheet for the affected line(s) is void. Forfeited lines will be reinstated and rescheduled if the line is unable to

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play at the scheduled time due to rain. If, however, the courts were playable at the scheduled time, the forfeit stands. The "scheduled time" will be defined as twenty minutes past the scheduled start time of the match as specified by the Home Captain.

(f) Inputting scores:

Scores must be reported by the Home Captain and confirmed or contested by the Visiting Captain as soon as all lines are completed. When possible, two weeks will be allowed after the last scheduled match in the division for rain make-ups to be completed. However, longer seasons may allow for only one week. Determination of the final date for score reporting for each division will be posted in the Required Points Chart.

8. Electronic Devices. 
- (a) All portable electronic devices MUST be turned OFF and are not permitted for use on the tennis court for any reason at any time. If a player chooses to use her electronic device on the court during the match, **other than to turn it off**, her line will immediately default the match.
- (b) If a device makes a sound on the court it must be turned off IMMEDIATELY without use and is considered a warning. The opponent may claim the point due to hindrance, if applicable. Any subsequent violation of this rule by ANY player on that court will result in a forfeiture of the match by the offending team on that court.
- (c) Players may use their electronic devices during the 10 minute break allowed between the 2nd and 3rd sets provided they are NOT ON THE COURT.
9. No linesmen or umpires will be provided for matches.
10. HLTA matches are non-officiated matches. A player cannot call a foot fault on her opponent, but a player can ask the player not to foot fault. Players should make every effort not to foot fault during their service motion.
11. No coaching will be allowed during matches at any time, including the break between the second and third sets by anyone, including coaches, pros, captains, teammates or any other spectator. Teammates and spectators (including coaches and pros) may not volunteer advice on line calls, scoring or the conduct of the match. **It is the Home Team's responsibility to control the spectators' conduct during match play.** No spectators will be allowed on the court proper.
12. No children are allowed courtside at matches at any time. Offending line will be defaulted.
13. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated. The Head League Coordinator under the advisement of the Board may penalize a player or team that displays unsportsmanlike conduct.
14. Unless otherwise specified, USTA rules will govern play. Also, "The Code" as a handbook of ethics and fair play should be understood and followed by every HLTA player. Captains and team members are urged to familiarize themselves with the official USTA rules and "The Code".
15. Any situation not covered by these Rules should be referred to your Captain. If in doubt, your Captain can contact your Flight Coordinator. Your Flight Coordinator will either answer your question or contact the

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proper person. The HLTA Board will make the final decision where HLTA rules are concerned. All official protests must be submitted in writing **within 7 days** of the scheduled match being protested. The score sheets of a protested match should not be signed. The score sheet, grievance form and a written explanation of the grievance should be emailed to the Head League Coordinator and the Board Secretary at their email addresses listed on the grievance form. See further instructions on the HLTA Grievance Form in the Website's Document Library.