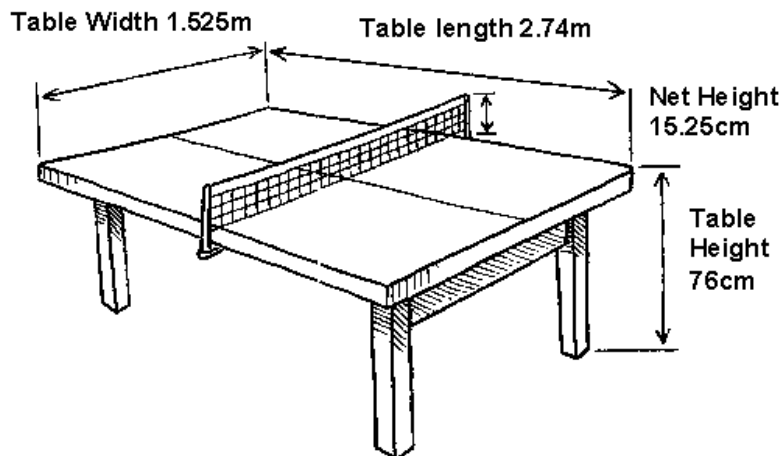


A Short Guide to Table Tennis

Part 1: Getting Started

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Rules and Dimensions:



A complete set of ITTF rules can be found at www.ittf.org

Table Tennis was invented by an English diplomat about 100 years ago, and rapidly spread to other countries. An Olympic sport, table tennis is now one of the most popular sports in the world, with over 150 countries participating. The big table tennis nations of the world are China, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Korea and Japan. There are other European nations that field one or two good players but they generally lacked a consistently strong team.

The ball is 40mm and weights 2.7g.

There has been a bit of controversy as far as the size of balls is concerned. Previously, all table tennis balls were 38 mm. However, in an effort to make the game more 'spectator friendly', the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) decided to reduce the speed and spin of the game. This is a bid to make rallies longer and more entertaining. (The ball has already been changed to orange so that TV viewers can more easily see the ball). The easiest way to do this is to increase the size of the ball. This makes it harder to spin the ball during service and loops are slower. There were also extensive changes to the scoring system (11 point games instead of 21) and rules regarding serving.

Many players protested – especially players who relied on the fast game or a devastating serve. Liu Guo-Liang – one of the most dominant players in recent years retired citing new rule changes as one of the main factors!!

But hopefully, in the long run, these rule changes will make table tennis more dynamic and entertaining!

How to tell good balls from ones not so good:

The very cheap balls (ones you buy at CVS) have a visible join running along the entire circumference of the ball. Some are multicolored and some are white. Never use these balls!

You also get balls with 2 stars on them. These balls are fine for practice.

3 star balls are competition balls. They bounce better because usually the shell is thinner. They also tend to break more but they are the right weight and have the correct bounce. So use these whenever you can.

Good Umpire:¹

1. Is it legal for doubles partners to swap bats in the middle of a rally ???

Only if they are married, or at least, very good friends. However, great care must be taken during the swapping maneuver to ensure neither bat is dropped. It is also recommended that swapping be restricted to long boring rallies as a means of distracting your opponents. Note also that during normal doubles play, by players of B grade standard and higher, that the time lapse between shots is approx 0.895 seconds. Therefore, bat swapping needs to be practised so that it can be performed extremely quickly.
NB: Bat swapping is forbidden in MD & WD events. This is to prevent the spread of BSD (Bat Swapping Disease)

2. Is it legal for the umpire to call "Play on" during a rally ???

Only in event of earthquake or other natural disaster. However in where 'play' means 'let' and 'on' means 'please' this is a perfectly normal call.
Note: Be careful in Mongolia, where 'play' means 'get' and 'on' means 'knotted' - remember many Mongolians are descendents of Attila the Hun.

3. Is it legal for a coach outside the playing area to make silent signals to a player during a match ???

Only between points as most table tennis players are too busy watching the silly little bouncing yellow thing to pay attention to the coach. However, as most sports fans know, the reason the All Blacks failed to win the World Cup was the lack of silent signals from Mr J Hart to Mr T Randall, therefore the following experimental signals have been agreed to by ITTF for the 2002 season:

- a) Coach holds up left hand - "attack down opponents forehand"
 - b) Holds up sign with "fas.harvard.edu" on it - "hang in there - consulting online coaching manual and will get back to you shortly"
 - c) Holds up right hand - "attack down opponents backhand"
- NB: Signals a and c are reversed if opponent is left-handed
d) Scratches head - "don't have any advice"

4. Is it legal to throw the ball high in service with one hand and then pick up the bat and serve with the same hand ???

Yes, providing the following conditions are met:

- a) Umpire is advised beforehand
- b) If server has only one usable hand

Note: that the bat must be in the hand no later than 0.5 secs before striking the ball, or the umpire should call "No Ball".

Special note: No gluing-up is allowed between the throwing up of the ball and striking it. Any breaking of this rule to be immediately dealt with by the umpire showing the offending player a yellow card and awarding point to opponent.

Extra special note: Should the ball be in flight longer than 30 seconds before being struck the server shall be penalised a point for time wasting.

Any dissent dealt with by showing a red card.

¹ source: Table Tennis New Zealand – with modifications

Words to Know!

Pimples / pimples out	Instead of a smooth rubber surface, the surface consists of hundreds of small round 'pimples' , some up to 2mm in height. There is less surface area, so pimple rubber imparts less spin on the ball.
Reverse pimples	The pimples face into the bat with a smooth surface for hitting. With more surface area, reverse pimples or 'smooth rubber' generally impart a greater amount of spin on the ball. Generally, it is only possible to loop using reverse pimples.
Long pimples	This rubber generally has no impact on the spin of the ball. However, if it is used to hit a top spinning ball, then the ball is generally returned with some backspin and vice versa. This is because a top spinning ball is hit back without a change in its spin – in effect causing backspin.
Short pimples	The shorter the pimples, the more 'reverse pimple' like it is. Short pimples are generally used by attack players for their speed. Generally, there is not a great amount of spin.
Sponge	Rubber is rarely directly adhered to the bat. Generally, a layer of sponge separates the rubber and the bat. Sponge type has a great impact on gluing. Generally, soft sponges are more suited for gluing than hard sponges. Thicker sponges (up to 2.3mm) give greater power but less control than thinner counterparts.
Anti-spin	Looks like smooth rubber but imparts no spin. Similar characteristics to long pimple. Normal smooth rubber that has been left out in the sun or has been badly cared for can acquire this property!
Net Call	There are no net calls in table tennis. If the ball hits the net and lands on your side – too bad!! The ball is only allowed to bounce on the net once.
Edge	If the ball hits the edge of the table, it is counted in. Unless it hit the 'side' of the playing surface.
Let Call	Call a let if the current point is being disturbed by external factors. The point will be replayed. Let may also be used to delay the opposition from serving until you are ready to receive.
Loop	The attacking shot of choice after the introduction of reverse pimples which imparts a lot of spin. Loops can transform a ball of any spin into a heavy top spin attacking shot. This is why no serious professional player is a perpetual chopper anymore! Can also be played on the backhand.
Expedite	Old rule that prevents games dragging on forever – used to deal with incessant choppers. Especially when choppers play choppers.
Glue	Glue is the substance that holds the rubber (sponge included) onto the bat.
Gluing	The process of applying a layer of glue onto the reverse side of the rubber. The volatile substances in the glue are absorbed by the sponge and this changes the property of the rubber as a whole. The bat will

sound different. Gluing allows a player to achieve more spin and speed. Many types of glue are illegal because of the toxicity in the vapors (Pang and other car tire glues). But generally illegal glue is faster than legal glue. You can also make your own glue by using white spirits, turpentine and various other solvents.

De-Gluing

Serious players will glue for all practices and competitions. Often several times in a day during competition. Constant gluing will cause a build up of glue on the reverse of the rubber. This makes the rubber heavier and generally, this will cause the rubber to slow down. Instead of throwing the rubber away, players on a budget sometimes carefully peel the glue away from the sponge – leaving a clean sponge ready for more glue!

The Finger

Holding up the index finger with knuckles facing you. It could mean 'Sorry!', 'Let!' or 'Good Shot!'.

Chow! Sa! Ousa! Oush! Yes!

Things players say after making a good shot. 'Chow!' is by far the most popular followed by 'Sa'. Generally 'Yes!' is not a part of this vocabulary.